Teaching with Testimony

the willesden project
a global education initiative

Middle School Student Activity

Women and Resistance

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How have women resisted oppression throughout history?
- How have women led resistance movements and efforts throughout history?
- What is the relationship between resistance and human dignity?

Overview

This activity engages students with the topic of the important roles women played in resistance movements and efforts during the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the Guatemalan Genocide, and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Students begin by using a 3-2-1 strategy to analyze three excerpts and familiarize themselves with stories of women's involvement in resistance movements and efforts through history. Next, students will learn about examples of women's leadership in resistance movements and efforts by studying testimonies from survivors of the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the Guatemalan Genocide, and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Students will then further analyze the role of women in resistance movements and efforts through a small-group research activity, in which they will research the contributions of individual women to various resistance movements and efforts throughout history and share their findings with the community.

Target Audience

Grades 6–8

Activity Duration

Two 45–60 minute sessions

Enduring Understandings

- During the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the Guatemalan Genocide, and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, civilians resisted oppression, injustice, and hate through acts in opposition to the policies, actions, or authority of those in power.
- Women have held key leadership roles in resistance movements and efforts throughout history and into the present day.
- When faced with overwhelming adversity, women have found ways to exhibit agency for themselves and empower others.

Materials

- 3-2-1 Organizer Handout (1 per student)
- Three Excerpts for Structured Reading (as many as needed at teacher discretion)
- Testimony as Primary Source Analysis Handout (5 per student)

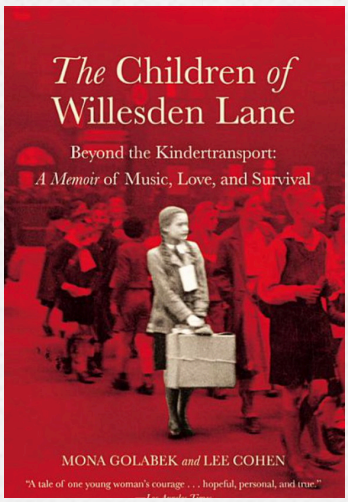
Historical Background for Educator

Resistance movements and efforts throughout history have emerged during mass atrocities and genocides as individuals and groups worked together to find ways to exhibit agency for themselves and empower others in the face of oppression. Throughout history, women have established themselves as leaders in these resistance movements and efforts against hatred and oppression. By studying the stories of women in resistance movements and efforts during the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the Guatemalan Genocide, and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, students can learn the importance of resistance to hatred and oppression throughout history.

The Armenian Genocide

On October 29th, 1914, the Ottoman Empire, led by the Young Turk government, entered the First World War on the side of the Central Powers. Under the cover of war, the Armenian Christians, who were viewed as ethnic and religious "others" by the state, were targeted by the government for destruction. This was part of a plan to form a Turkish state and expand Ottoman territories east beyond the Armenian Highlands. These crimes against the Armenian people are known as the Armenian Genocide.

In 1915, leaders of the Young Turk government began to eliminate its Armenian population through the political orders of forced deportations and mass murder. To avoid any possible resistance, more than 200 Armenian community leaders were arrested on April 24th in Constantinople (Istanbul). Most were executed soon after. In large groups, Armenians were forced out of their homes and pushed south toward the Syrian desert. Along the way, men were separated and killed, while women and children were forced to march under extremely harsh conditions. As Armenians were removed from their towns, new laws allowed for their homes, businesses, and churches to be looted, confiscated, and/or destroyed. In some places, Armenian communities led efforts to resist deportation, such as in Van, Urfa, or Musa Dagh. Most Armenians survived death as a result of forced conversion to Islam, abduction, forced adoption, or being sold or married into Turkish, Kurdish, or Arab households. Others were saved due to aid from American and European missionary and relief organizations, while others were saved by neighbors who resisted political orders to harm Armenians. An estimated 1.5 million Armenians, approximately two-thirds of the pre-war Armenian population living in the Ottoman Empire, were murdered between 1915 and 1923.



The Holocaust

In 1932, Adolf Hitler, leader of the nationalist, antisemitic, and racist National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party), was elected to the German Reichstag (Parliament). The Nazis established a single-party dictatorship referred to as the Third Reich. From 1933 until 1939, the Nazi government enacted hundreds of increasingly restrictive and discriminatory laws and decrees that banned Jews from all aspects of German public life.

During World War II, the Nazis systematically targeted Jews in Nazi-occupied territories. Jews were forced to wear identifying symbols, relocate to heavily crowded ghettos, and participate in forced labor. Millions of Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. The Nazis also targeted racial, political, or ideological groups deemed "inferior" or "undesirable"—Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, Slavic peoples, the mentally and physically disabled, Socialists, Communists, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Even when their defeat was imminent, the Nazi leadership committed resources to the destruction of Europe's Jewish population. Prisoners were forced to evacuate in what are now known as Death Marches.

The Guatemalan Genocide

Guatemala's 36-year civil war devastated the Central American country in many ways, but one particularly brutal campaign by the government's army stands out. As the Guatemalan civil war was about to enter its third decade in 1980, the army instituted "Operation Sophia," which sought to undermine anti-government guerrillas by terrorizing or killing civilians whom the army suspected were supporting the insurgents. The primary targets were descendants of the Maya, whose indigenous civilization dominated the region until the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century.

From 1980 to 1983, the army, supplemented by private "death squads" hired by wealthy landowners, systematically razed more than 400 villages, torching buildings and crops, slaughtering livestock, poisoning water supplies, and killing or abducting whomever they pleased. People who were snatched off the street or dragged out of their homes were often summarily executed and dumped in unmarked graves. They are called the "disappeared."

At the same time, more than 100,000 women, most of them Maya, were raped, a United Nations commission later concluded. Amid the terror, as many as 1.5 million refugees—more than one in five people then living in the country—fled their homes. Around 200,000 people left the country entirely, crowding into refugee camps in southern Mexico.

The 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda

The decolonization of Rwanda in the 1950s led to violence against the Tutsi. When Rwanda became an independent republic in 1962, the Hutu established a dictatorship. Ethnic division and violence forced some Tutsi into exile. In October 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a militant group founded by Tutsi refugees, invaded Rwanda. The RPF demanded a safe return to Rwanda and expected a role in the country's government. Rwandan president, Juvénal Habyarimana, was forced to negotiate a peace agreement with the RPF. Hutu extremists feared they would lose power and formed militias, called Interahamwe. These militias believed in Hutu supremacy, and promoted violence against Tutsis. On the evening of April 6th, 1994, a private jet carrying President Habyarimana was shot out of the sky, killing everyone on board. Immediately, extremists within the government and the media blamed the RPF for the attack. Militias set up roadblocks around the capital city of Kigali. Their perceived enemies—Tutsi leaders and Hutu who did not believe in ethnic-based nationalism—were targeted for killing. By the morning of April 7th, the genocide had begun. Violence quickly spread throughout the country. The RPF believed the violence violated the ceasefire, and they renewed their campaign against Rwandan government forces. Tutsi were hunted, tortured, raped, and murdered. Neighbors, friends, and family members turned on one another. Much of the killing was perpetrated with machetes and other farm tools. Tutsi sought refuge in churches, schools, and stadiums. During prior instances of mass violence, churches offered sanctuary. Yet, during the genocide, militias attacked them. Schools, stadiums, and churches are now the sites of mass graves. Over approximately 100 days, Hutu extremists murdered at least 900,000 Tutsi and Hutu moderates. The genocide in Rwanda is the fastest in modern history.

Sources

- Brief Histories The Armenian Genocide, 1915–1923
- Brief Histories The Holocaust, 1933–1945
- Brief Histories The Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, 1994
- The Armenian Genocide (1915–16):in Depth
- Guatemalan Genocide

Procedure

Ask

1. Begin the activity by dividing the class into three groups. Each group will be provided with one of the following excerpts below. Each group will use the *3-2-1 Organizer Handout* to complete a structured reading of their provided excerpt.
    - Excerpt 1: *Gender and the Genocide* in Rwanda Book Excerpt(s)
    - Excerpt 2: "Untold Story of Jewish Women Resisting Nazis during the Holocaust" article
    - Excerpt 3: Transmitted Defiance: Genocide Resistance Across Generations of Armenian Women Excerpt
    - Excerpt 4: Menchú R, Burgos-Debray, E. *I, Rigoberta Menchú: an Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Verso; 1984.

2. The goal of this 3-2-1 reading activity is to introduce students to the importance of studying the roles of women in resistance movements and efforts during the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the Guatemalan Genocide, and the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

3. To conclude the 3-2-1 reading activity, the teacher will lead a whole-class discussion to debrief key points from the three excerpts and orient students to the central question of the day: How have women resisted oppression and hatred throughout history?

   - To facilitate this discussion, the teacher may ask students to share their prepared talking points, connections to previous knowledge and current events, or discussion questions they created through their *3-2-1 Organizer Handout*.
   - The teacher may also use the following guiding questions to assist students in identifying and debriefing key points from the excerpts:
     - What does it mean to resist oppression and hatred?
     - How does the concept of "agency" relate to resistance (Excerpt 1)?
     - How did women resist oppression and hatred during the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda (Excerpt 1)?
     - How did women resist oppression and hatred during the Armenian Genocide (Excerpt 3)?
     - How did women resist oppression and hatred during the Holocaust (Excerpt 2)?
     - How did women resist oppression and hatred during the Guatemalan Genocide (Excerpt 4)?

Analyze

4. Next, students will analyze the concept of spiritual resistance during the Holocaust through testimonies, using the modified *Testimony as Primary Source Analysis handout*.

   - The *Testimony as Primary Source handout* will be modified to orient students back to the central question and concept of women as leaders through resistance movements and efforts: "How did these women resist oppression and hatred during their lives?"

5. As students prepare to view the following testimonies, help them understand the importance of:

   - paying attention to the speaker's tone of voice and body language;
   - considering the context and perspectives of the witness; and
   - focusing on the personal story of the testimony as opposed to facts and figures.

6. When viewing testimony, help strengthen the experience by:

   - providing students with the biographies of the survivors providing testimony;
   - pausing clips to allow time for students to reflect, record thoughts, questions, and ideas;
   - engaging students in investigations using active inquiry;

- promoting interdisciplinary thinking and learning through common, recurring themes; and
- creating connections to their own lives and personal experiences.

7 Testimonies for analysis

- Ellen Brandt—(1: 35) Ellen describes how she joined a Jewish youth movement organization that would organize resistance activities such as marches and singing Jewish songs instead of songs like the Nazi national anthem.
- Vladka Meed—(4:42) Vladka discusses the challenges of smuggling dynamite into the Warsaw Ghetto to aid the resistance groups that organized the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of spring 1943.
- Nvart Assaturian—(1:51) Nvart describes how women brought food to their husbands and family members who had been arrested and imprisoned during a night of anti-Armenian arrests in Bitlis.
- Samuel Kadorian—(0:38) Samuel remembers the accomplishments of his mother, who saved at least one hundred lives during the Armenian Genocide.
- Rose Burizihiza—(2:20) Rose discusses the leadership of Rwanda's government, with particular emphasis on First Lady Jeannette Kagame.
- Rosalina Tuyuc Velasquez—(3:26) Rosalina reflects on the importance of preserving ancestral indigenous culture, particularly in the aftermath of the genocide perpetrated on Gutemalan Mayans.

8 Upon conclusion of the testimony analysis, students will discuss the reflective prompts from their completed *Testimony as Primary Source Analysis Handouts* and share important facts, emotions, and quotes from the testimonies that resonated with them. The teacher should challenge students to continue to consider how these women exhibited agency for themselves and empowered others when faced with overwhelming adversity during the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

Apply

9 Students will take a deeper dive into the concept of women's leadership in resistance movements and efforts during the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda through a small-group research activity.

10 The teacher will begin the activity by organizing students into small groups. The teacher will have the autonomy to select group size based on individual needs such as class size, management needs, etc., but small groups of 3 to 4 students will work well for this activity.

11 Next, the teacher will provide each small group with the name of one woman who emerged as a leader in resistance movements and efforts during the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, or the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The list of names may include:

- Woman Featured in Excerpt 1 of the Ask section above:
    - Josephine Dusabimana

- Women Featured in full Article from Excerpt 2 of the Ask section above:
    - Hannah Senesh
    - Tosia Altman
    - Gusta Davidson
    - Frumka Plotnicka
- Women Featured in Excerpt 3 of the Ask section above:
    - Aguline Dertazyan
    - Mariam, grandmother of Bertha Nakshian Ketchian
- Women Featured in Excerpt 4 of the Ask section above:
    - Rigoberta Menchu
- Women Featured in the Testimonies provided in the Analyze section above:
    - Ellen Brandt (testimony provided in Analyze section)
    - Vladka Meed (testimony provided in Analyze section)
    - Rose Burizihiza (testimony provided in Analyze section)
    - Nvart Assaturian (testimony provided in Analyze section)
    - Rosalina Tuyuc Velasquez (testimony provided in the Analyze section)
- The teacher may also provide their own names of women who served in leadership roles during resistance movements and efforts, selected at the teacher's discretion.

12 Through the small-group research activity, students will research the roles their assigned woman played in resistance movements and efforts throughout history. The following guiding questions can be used to structure small group research:

- What resistance movement(s) was your person involved in?
- How did your person demonstrate leadership through their participation in resistance movement(s)?
- How did their involvement in this movement reveal strength and human dignity?
- How did their participation in this movement impact and empower others?
- How might their story empower you to be a leader and advocate for others in your life?

Act

13 After completing research on their assigned individual, students will create a presentation to share with members of the school community such as their peers, teachers, administrators, and/or invited guests like parents or guardians through a Gallery Crawl Expo hosted in a shared space (Media Center, cafeteria, etc.).

14 Students will prepare to participate in the Gallery Crawl by creating a physical presentation display and a verbal presentation to accompany their physical display.

- Student presentation displays may be designed as posters, tri-fold boards, digital multimedia presentations such as screencasts, videos, narrated slide decks, etc., to display and communicate their findings from their small group research activity about their assigned leader.

15 To support their created physical display, and share the group's knowledge with community stakeholders, at least one group member should remain with the display throughout the Gallery Crawl to offer an interactive verbal presentation to Gallery attendees.

Connections

Connection to Student Lives	Connection to Contemporary Events	Connection to the Future
Students will develop their knowledge of women as leaders in resistance movements and efforts to fight oppression and injustice and identify the relationship between resistance, strength, and human dignity.	Students will analyze examples of women participating in resistance movements and efforts in the past to discover for themselves how they can resist or empower others to resist current-day oppression or injustice.	Students can use their knowledge of women in resistance movements and efforts and the relationship between resistance, strength, and human dignity to inform future student advocacy to support and empower future resistance efforts.

Clips of Testimony

- Ellen Brandt, a Jewish survivor, describes how she joined a Jewish youth movement organization that would organize resistance activities such as marches and singing Jewish songs instead of songs like the Nazi national anthem. (1:35)
- Vladka Meed, a Jewish survivor, discusses the challenges of smuggling dynamite into the Warsaw Ghetto to aid the resistance groups that organized the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of spring 1943. (4:42)
- Nvart Assaturian, an Armenian survivor, describes how women brought food to their husbands and family members who had been arrested and imprisoned during a night of anti-Armenian arrests in Bitlis. (1:51)

- Samuel Kadorian, an Armenian survivor, remembers the accomplishments of his mother, who saved at least one hundred lives during the Armenian Genocide. (0:38)
- Rose Burizihiza, a Tutsi survivor, discusses the leadership of Rwanda's government, with particular emphasis on First Lady Jeannette Kagame. (2:20)
- Rosalina Tuyuc Velasquez, a Guatemalan survivor, reflects on the importance of preserving ancestral indigenous culture, particularly in the aftermath of the genocide perpetrated on Guatemalan Mayans. (3:26)

National Standards and Frameworks

C3 Framework

D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D3.1.6-8. Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

D4.2.6-8. Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

D4.8.6-8. Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms and schools, and in out-of-school civic contexts.

Common Core ELA

SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CASEL's SEL Framework

SOCIAL AWARENESS: The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts. This includes the capacity to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Such as:

- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others

The Willesden Project is a global initiative that expands the reach of Lisa Jura's story of survival, resilience, and triumph as she struggles to come of age separated from her family during World War II, as originally shared by her daughter, author and concert pianist Mona Golabek, in *The Children of Willesden Lane* books and musical performances. Learn more at The Willesden Project.

Survivor and Witness Biographies

STUDENT HANDOUT

Ellen Brandt

Ellen Brandt, born on May 10th, 1922, in Mannheim, Germany, was the only child of Mathilda and Guido Friedsam. Ellen's father served in the German military and was a decorated World War I veteran. When Ellen was six months old, the family moved to Munich where her father bought a paper factory. Foreseeing Hitler's rise to power, Ellen's father thought it dangerous to continue to own a business. Therefore, in early 1933, less than a month before Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany, the family moved to Berlin where Ellen's father ran a factory owned by non-Jews. Her father felt this new position offered his family greater anonymity and safety. In Berlin, Ellen became keenly aware of increasingly limited basic rights for the Jewish community and describes the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 as a life-altering event. She remembers witnessing Jews being beaten to death on the streets and seeing others rounded up and taken away. In 1936, she began to be shunned at school when her school teachers were no longer allowed to speak to Jewish children, and Jewish students were forbidden from interacting with non-Jewish schoolmates. Ellen's parents eventually removed her from that school, and before the outbreak of the war, a relative living in the United States provided Ellen's family with affidavits to flee Germany. Ellen's father was able to expedite the family's departure within twenty-four hours due to his status as a decorated veteran. On April 6th, 1938, the family arrived in New York City. Ellen's family eventually moved to Toledo, Ohio, where she attended college. At the time of the interview in 1996, Ellen had a daughter, Jody (Grotzinger); a son, Geoffrey; and two grandchildren.

Vladka Meed

Vladka Meed was born Vladka Peltel in 1922 in Warsaw, Poland, to Hanna and Shlomo Peltel. She had two younger siblings: Chaim and Henia. Vladka went to a private school and remembered seeing some Jewish children being beaten by non-Jews on the way to school. She also remembered that non-Jews would sometimes avoid the Jewish shops. When the Germans passed anti-Jewish laws, everyone in the family had to work to get food. For her part, Vladka would take off her armband and pass as a non-Jew, selling valuables for food in the Polish part of town. In the fall of 1940, the family was forced to move into the Warsaw ghetto. The family continued to sell its belongings to get food. Vladka managed to continue her education by attending clandestine schools after curfew. She also joined some youth resistance groups that were forming inside the ghetto. In November 1942, she was smuggled out of the ghetto on the first of many missions to purchase arms on the black market. During one such mission, Vladka met her future husband, Benjamin Meed, who was also working for the underground, smuggling children into hiding places outside the ghetto. Vladka continued her resistance work, helping Jews in hiding after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. She witnessed the uprising from outside the ghetto while printing posters intended to aid the Jewish cause. At the time of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, Vladka and Ben were hiding together in a town outside of Warsaw. In January 1945, the Soviet Army liberated Warsaw, and Vladka and Ben returned. At the time of Vladka's interview in 1996, she and her husband had five grandchildren: Michael, Johnathan, Jenny, Chavala, and Jessica.

Nvart Assaturian

Nvart Assaturian was born in the city of Bitlis in the historical Ottoman Empire in 1904. Nvart was a child when the Ottoman Turkish government issued a deportation order in 1915, first arresting and deporting her father, and later arresting Nvart and her remaining family members. However, Nvart's family was able to use their resources to bribe Ottoman Turkish policemen and return to their home, where they remained in hiding for about four months until they were discovered, arrested, and deported again. As the Russian Army approached the location where Nvart and her family were held, Ottoman Turkish officials killed many Armenian men, women, and children, including Nvart's brother. Nvart survived after her family was liberated by Russian soldiers. Nvart was interviewed in McLean, Virginia, on February 21st, 1988.

Survivor and Witness Biographies

STUDENT HANDOUT

Samuel Kadorian

Samuel Kadorian was born in 1907, in the province of Harput (Elâzığ, Turkey) in the Ottoman Empire. In 1915, mass forced deportations were ordered for Armenians who lived in Harput. Samuel, his parents, his two older sisters, and his younger brother were made to leave their home with other neighbors and forced to walk south toward the Syrian Desert. When passing the outskirts of Malatya, Samuel's father and other men, as well as boys older than 10 years old, were separated from the large group and killed by the Ottoman gendarmes (police). Days later, another round of killings took place as the Ottoman gendarmes threw Samuel and other boys between 5 and 8 years old into a pile along the Euphrates River and poked at them with their bayonets. Samuel survived this attack as he was at the bottom of the pile. Out of a family of seven, Samuel was the only surviving member of the Armenian Genocide. He immigrated to the United States in 1920. He was interviewed on August 15th, 1980, in the United States.

Rose Burizihiza

Rose Burizihiza was born into a family of eight children on August 5th, 1970, in what was formerly called the Sahera sector, in Cyeru cell, in the commune Ngoma, but is presently the sector Mukura, the cell Cyeru, and the district Huye of Rwanda. Rose and her sister are the only survivors of her immediate family of the 1994 Genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda. At the time of her interview in Ngoma-Huye, Southern Province, Rwanda in 2011, Rose was a mother of two and a widow.

Rosalina Tuyuc Velasquez

Rosalina Tuyuc Velasquez was born on October 14th, 1956, in San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango, Guatemala. Rosalina was born into a family of poor Christians, and she served her community as a member of women's groups and handicraft, agriculture, animal breeding cooperatives, as well as working as a teacher and auxiliary nurse. During the Guatemalan Genocide, Rosalina's father and husband were kidnapped, tortured, and believed to be murdered. In the mid-1980's, Rosalina and other leading women who were widowed by the Guatemalan Genocide founded the National Association of Guatemalan Widows, known by its Spanish acronym CONAVIGUA, which is a Guatemalan human rights organization that promotes full equality for women, respect for human rights, and active, peaceful resistance to hatred and violence. Today, Rosalina is a pioneer in womens rights and has held various political positions in Guatemalan, including National Congress member and magistrate in the first Court of Conscience of Guatemalan Women. Rosalina was interviewed on April 6th, 2015, in San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango, Guatemala.

3-2-1 Organizer Handout

STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: Complete the following graphic organizer as you read your assigned excerpt.

Title of Excerpt:		
Three (3) Talking Points In the space below, record three (3) points that stick out as being significant from your excerpt, and reflect on why you identified those points as important.	**Two (2) Connections** In the space below, identify two (2) connections from your excerpt. What are two things from your excerpt that reminded you of something you already know?	**One (1) Discussion Question** In the space below, create one (1) open-ended discussion question to share with your classmates about your excerpt.

Three Excerpts for Structured Reading

STUDENT HANDOUT

Excerpt 1: Gender and the Genocide in Rwanda Book Excerpt(s)

The following example contains two excerpts from Gender and the Genocide in Rwanda by Sara E. Brown (2017). Excerpt 1.1 contains the authors definition for resistance, and Excerpt 1.2 contains a portion of the story of Josephine Dusabimana, a well-known rescuer from Kibuye who was honored by the United States Department of State in 2011.

Excerpt 1.1

"Agency" refers to conscious acts of compliance with or resistance against the dominant, violent social structure, undertaken at personal risk and within a gendered context during the genocide in Rwanda. This is premised upon the underlying belief that all women made a choice. Women's agency is thus defined as the deliberate choice to take action, often at great personal risk to self and family. Perpetrators took a personal risk when they participated in genocidal crimes, and those women who rescued others took perhaps even greater risks when they acted to protect targeted victims.

Excerpt 1.2

Josephine Dusabimana is a well-known rescuer from Kibuye who was honored by the U.S. Department of State in 2011, and is the only woman rescuer who requested that I use her real name and not a pseudonym. In an effort to rescue those targeted for murder, she fearlessly outmaneuvered both the perpetrators of the genocide as well as her own family on several occasions. In one instance, realizing she could no longer hide two Tutsis in her home, she asked her cousin, who owned a boat, to transport two of her charges across Lake Kivu to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Her cousin demanded compensation. She considered her options and offered him ownership of a small herd of goats he was currently tending on her behalf. She knew this was a risky move. If her husband found out she had sold their goats in order to save these two people, he would be furious and possibly give them up to the Interahamwe. So she kept it a secret from him. But she also realized that she could not trust her cousin since his only incentive to assist her was financial gain. "All of a sudden, something hit me and I was like, 'The way this person accepted to help me when they are taking them across the lake—will they merely throw them in the lake?'"40 Again, she considered her options. "I got one of them [the Tutsis she was hiding] who was called Paul and told him 'Let's go outside.' So when I took Paul outside to talk to him, I told him, 'Now, you are going to go. But how will I know that you reached where you are supposed to go?'"41 In the end, Josephine and Paul agreed that he would hand over a marble he carried in his pocket to her cousin upon arrival in the DRC with instructions to deliver the marble to Josephine. When Josephine received the marble the next day, she knew they had arrived safely.

Three Excerpts for Structured Reading

STUDENT HANDOUT

Excerpt 2: Alt Miller, Yvette. (2021). *Untold Story of Jewish Women Resisting Nazis During the Holocaust.*

Link to full Article

Growing up in Montreal, Judy Batalion was surrounded by vibrant Jewish culture and role models. "I come from such a robust heritage," she explained in a recent Aish.com interview.

...Judy considered herself well educated about the Holocaust, yet she discovered how little she knew about Jewish resistance. "I didn't know anything about the scope of the resistance, including details about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising."

After studying at Harvard, then moving to London to earn a Ph.D. in art history, she also worked as a performer, and in 2007 decided to research heroic Jewish women for a potential show. Researching the Jewish partisan Hannah Senesh at the British Library changed her life.

Hannah Senesh—Partisan Hero

The starting point for Judy's historical journey was Hannah Senesh. Born in 1921 in Budapest, Hannah was a brilliant writer and an ardent Zionist. When she was 18, in 1939, she moved to Israel where she worked on a kibbutz and wrote beautiful poetry and accounts about life in Israel. In 1943, with the Jews of Europe facing annihilation, Hannah volunteered for a daring spy mission for the British Army. Along with 32 other volunteers, she parachuted into Nazi-occupied Europe intending to institute contact with resistance fighters and help Jewish communities.

After three months of fighting with Yugoslavian partisans, Hannah smuggled herself over the border into her native Hungary. The date was June 7, 1944, and the Nazis' deportation of Hungarian Jews to death camps was at its height.

Hannah Senesh was soon arrested by Hungarian police and turned over to the Nazi authorities, who tortured her brutally for months. Senesh refused to reveal any details of the British Army's spying plan, and she was sentenced to death by firing squad. On November 7, 1944, Senesh was executed. She refused a blindfold, looking straight at her executioners as they shot her.

Women in the Ghettos

Judy Batalion found that despite her fame, there were relatively few books about Hannah Senesh in the British Library. She ordered several books that mentioned Senesh's name. When the books arrived at the front desk, Judy noticed that one of them was written in Yiddish. She almost put it back.

Instead, she began to use the Yiddish she'd learned as a child to read the volume. It was an old book, published in 1946, called *Freuen in di Ghettos*—"Women in the Ghettos." This 185-page book described dozens of heroic Jewish women who fought Nazis as part of resistance movements and efforts. Their stories were incredible. Women smuggled arms into Jewish Ghettos. They assassinated Nazi officials. They spied for the Soviet Union, helped smuggle Jews out of Nazi Ghettos to safety, looked after the sick, and taught Jewish children. Some fought with armed partisans while others acted alone. Why had she never heard of these stories, Judy wondered? She decided to research some of these phenomenal stories.

Three Excerpts for Structured Reading

STUDENT HANDOUT

Excerpt 3: Marczak, Nikki. *Transmitted Defiance: Genocide Resistance Across Generations of Armenian Women Excerpt.*

Link to full Article

"In 1918, Aguline Dertazyan was volunteering at a Red Cross hospital in the town of her birth, Hadjin, when Turkish forces attacked. A bullet penetrated the hospital window and passed through the body of another nurse, killing her. It then lodged itself below Aguline's rib, but she survived. After the war, Aguline, who had been educated at boarding school in Constantinople, staged a play called The Valley of Tears in an Adana theatre to raise relief funds for survivors of the genocide. Moving to Lebanon and eventually America, she continued to perform in the theatre until late in her seventies, the bullet still wedged in her flesh. In a characteristic act of rebellion, at the age of 86, Aguline told her family she refused to be buried with a Turkish bullet in her body.

"She was very, very strong-willed, very stubborn," explains her granddaughter, Lory Tatoulian, a performer in Armenian theatre and film in Los Angeles. The admiration for her grandmother is palpable: "She gave birth to children; she functioned with a bullet in her body!"1 Lory believes she has inherited some of Aguline: her love of performance and an artistic nature, a dedication to preserving Armenian culture, and importantly, a characteristic she refers to in her grandmother as "tenacity": "I see her story as a source of strength; when I face problems in my life I always think of my grandmother…and how she was so resilient." To honor Aguline's wishes, when she died her family arranged for the bullet to be surgically removed and donated to the Hadjin Museum in Armenia.2

During and after the genocide, Armenian women resisted: silently, discreetly, but sometimes also loudly and overtly; and often in spiritual or cultural ways. A common thread in women's testimonies (and unmistakable in the story of Aguline Dertazyan) is a spirit of defiance—a sense of dignity, resilience, and a refusal to allow their identity to be destroyed—that they have passed on to future generations, in what I conceptualize as a process of transmitted defiance…

The relationships between family members, and the role descendants take on in preserving their relatives' memories, echo the historical importance of intergenerational relationships in pre-war Armenian families. Traditionally, many generations lived together, and cultural knowledge was transmitted between grandmothers, mothers, and daughters. Survivor Bertha Nakshian Ketchian described her own grandmother, Mariam, who refused to give her away to a Turkish official, emphasizing her grandmother's courage and the importance of having been able to preserve her Armenian identity:

"She was afraid of nothing and nobody. … And now she was fighting with all her might and cleverness to protect what was left of her once thriving large family… You saved me from going to worse than death and staying in the house of the enemy to become a Turk. … Dear Grandmother Mariam, I appreciate what you did with all my heart. Moreover, as the years go by, I realize more fully how very much it means to me to have lived as who I really am."

Three Excerpts for Structured Reading

STUDENT HANDOUT

Excerpt 4: Menchú R, Burgos-Debray, E. I, *Rigoberta Menchú: an Indian Woman in Guatemala.* Verso; 1984.

I'd like to say here, that I wasn't the only important one. I was part of a family, just like all my brothers and sisters. The whole community was important. We used to discuss many of the community's problems together, especially when someone was ill and we couldn't buy medicine, because we were getting poorer and poorer. We'd start discussing and heaping insults on the rich who'd made us suffer for so long. It was about then I began learning about politics. I tried to talk to people who could help me sort my ideas out. I wanted to know what the world was like on the other side. I knew the *finca*, I knew the *Altiplano*. But what I didn't know was about the problems of the other Indians in Guatemala. I didn't know the problems other groups had holding on to their land. I knew there were lots of other Indians in part of the country, because I'd been meeting them in the *finca* since I was a child, but although we all worked together we didn't know the names of the towns they came from, or how they lived, or what they ate. We just imagined that they were like us. Well, I started thinking about my childhood, and I came to the conclusion that I hadn't had a childhood at all. I was never a child. I hadn't been to school, I hadn't had enough food to grow properly, I had nothing. I asked myself: 'How is this possible?' I compared it to the life of the children of rich people I'd seen. How they ate. Even their dogs. They even taught their dogs to only recognize their masters and reject the maids. All these things were jumbled up in my mind, I couldn't separate my ideas. That's when I began making friends from other villages in Uspantan. I asked them: 'What do you eat? How do you make your breakfast? What do you have for lunch? What do you eat for supper? And yes, they said the same: 'Well, in the morning, we eat *tortillas* with salt and a little *pinol*. At midday, our mother brings *tortillas* and any plants she finds in the fields.' 'At night we eat *tortillas* with *chile*,' they said, '*chile* with *tortillas*, and then we go to sleep.' So everything was the same. It gave me a lot to think about. I have to tell you that I didn't learn my politics at school. I just tried to turn my own experience into something which was common to a whole people. I was also very happy when I realized that it wasn't just my problem; that I wasn't the only little girl to have worried about not wanting to grow up. We were all worried about the harsh life awaiting us.

The CUC started growing, it spread like fire among the peasants in Guatemala. We began to understand that the root of all our problems was exploitation. That there were rich and poor and that the rich exploited the poor—our sweat, our labour. That's how they got richer and richer. The fact that we were always waiting in offices, always bowing to the authorities, was part of the discrimination we Indians suffered. So was the cultural oppression which tries to divide us by taking away our traditions and prevents unity among our people. The situation got worse when the murderous generals came to power although I didn't actually know who was the president at the time. I began to know them from 1974 on, when General Kjell Laugerud came to power. He came to our region and said: 'We're going to solve the land problem. The land belongs to you. You cultivate the land and I will share it out among you.' We trusted him, I was at the meeting when Kjell Laugerud spoke. And what did he give us? My father tortured and imprisoned. I know it was because he'd discovered all their underhand tricks. He hated those people. He used to say: 'What do they know about hunger when they suck the blood of our people every day?' It angered me to not have to have my elder brothers with us, not to know them, because they'd died of hunger, of malnutrition, of not having enough to eat in the *finca*. I said: 'If they'd had enough to eat, my brothers would still be alive with us today. They didn't die because they wanted to.'...

I didn't sleep much during this period, thinking about the future. What would it be like if all the Indians rose up and took the land and the crops away from the landowners? Would they get weapons and kill us? I had incredible dreams. But, in fact, they weren't just empty dreams. My dreams came true when we started organizing. Children had to behave like grown-ups. We women had to play our part as women in the community, together with our parents, our brothers, our neighbours. We all had to unite, all of us together.

Three Excerpts for Structured Reading

STUDENT HANDOUT

We held meetings. We began by asking for a community school. We didn't have a school. We collected signatures. I was involved in this. I played a key role because I was learning Spanish and because the priests knew me and so did some of my father's other friends. I asked for help wherever I could, and I got it. We had a *ladino* friend in the town who gave us a little money, both for my father and us at home. But we didn't use this money for ourselves: we shared it with the community. We were now getting organized. We already had various organizations; childrens' groups, young peoples' groups, womens' groups, catechists' groups, and we began strengthening these groups. We wanted to make plans for us all to learn Spanish. I spent one afternoon teaching the children the bit of Spanish I knew. Not to write, of course, because I couldn't write. I couldn't read or write. But to teach them to speak as we spoke in our language.

At the end of 1977, I decided to join a more formal group—a group of peasants in Huehuetenango. It was a clandestine group and we'd go down to the *finca* and work among the workers in the *finca*. The *campañeros* of the CUC worked among them too. And yet, I still hadn't reached the rewarding stage of participating fully, as an Indian first, and then as a woman, a peasant, a Christian, in the struggle of all my people. That's when I started being more involved.

My father went on with his work. He used to say: 'My children, there are rich people and there are poor. The rich have become rich because they took what our ancestors had away from them, and now they grow fat on the sweat of our labour. We know this is true because we live it every day, not because someone else tells us. The rich try to obstruct us. The rich come from over there, where the *ladinos'* government is. It's the government of the rich, the landowners.' We began seeing things more clearly and, as I said, it was not difficult for us to understand that we had to join together in the struggle, because for us this was something real, something we'd all experienced.

Modified Testimony as Primary Source Analysis Chart

STUDENT HANDOUT

Bio Interviewee Name: _____ Experience Group: _____

Birth Date and Place: _____

Additional Relevant Info: _____

Directions: As you watch the clip of testimony, write facts that are presented in the left column. Use the right column to note emotions the interviewee demonstrates.

Facts: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How List the topic, dates, event details, location (city, region, country), and names/groups.	**Emotions: What emotions did you notice?** Notice facial and body expressions, tone of voice, pauses, and word choice.
Reflection Prompts (After viewing the testimony clip)	
What event is this person recalling? How do they feel about the event?	
How did this individual resist oppression and hatred during the events they are describing in their testimony?	