

# The Art of Resilience



## Activity Overview

This Educator Guide helps teachers implement the *Art of Resilience* video topic series resources for students. It contains an overview of key themes in the video topic series, contextual information for the *Art of Resilience* activities, and extension activities to extend student inquiry into the relationship between art and resilience.

## About the *Art of Resilience* Video Topic Series

The *Art of Resilience* is a three-part video topic series highlighting the power of art and the creative process in building resilience among survivors of traumatic events. The series chronicles the journeys of talented and impactful artists who use their art to tell their stories and inspire others. Each testimony illustrates how art reaffirms shared humanity by celebrating culture, identity, and survival.

First-hand testimony from three artists are highlighted in this series:

- Arpi Krikorian: A visual artist who has dedicated her life to celebrating the joy, color, and beauty of Armenia
- Lual Mayen: A self-taught video game designer who uses his own experience as a refugee from South Sudan to design immersive gaming and digital tools to generate educational experiences and social impact
- Mona Golabek: A concert pianist who wrote the 2002 book *The Children of Willesden Lane* about her mother's experience with the Kindertransport during the Holocaust

## How Is Art Important to Resilience?

Art serves many purposes. It can inspire, enlighten, entertain, bind people together as communities, and offer ways to convey important messages in diverse, creative ways. For survivors and/or descendants of a traumatic event, making, displaying, and/or performing art can also make the artist more resilient while inspiring courage and resilience in others.

## What Is a Testimony?

A testimony is when someone shares an authentic, first-hand account of their experience and the listener gains a new understanding. Testimonies, or people's stories, are deeply personal and can tremendously influence our own lives. For the following activities, testimony serves as an effective primary source that contextualizes historical events for students and allows them to consider not just the historical context, but also the human experience. Testimony helps students to foster empathy, build critical thinking skills, and connects the past to students' present lives.

Each activity in the *Art of Resilience* video topic series includes the highlighted artist's testimony and embedded activities that invite students to analyze testimonies from others throughout history, including survivors of the Holocaust and Armenian Genocide. This educator guide includes supplemental testimonial resources that teachers can use to further unpack important themes from each video topic series activity and inspire courage and resilience amongst students.

## Art of Resilience Activities

The *Art of Resilience* video topic series includes three student-centered activities that empower learners to build knowledge about the relationship between art and resilience. Each activity features standards-aligned, 45–60-minute lessons building from the artist's accompanying video testimony. These lessons pair digital media with easy-to-follow instructions to guide students through analyzing testimony and reflecting on how to apply these concepts in their lives.

Key student takeaways for the video topic series include learning that for survivors and/or descendants of a traumatic event, the act of making, displaying, and/or performing art can make the artist more resilient, bind survivors of a traumatic event, and help teach future generations about what happened in the past and why it should never happen again. In addition, art can help reaffirm one's humanity by celebrating the culture, identity, and survival of the survivors and/or descendants of that event.

## Activity 1: Arpi Krikorian

### Overview

In this activity, students will explore what it means to be resilient and evaluate how art can build resilience in survivors and descendants of traumatic events. This activity invites students to think about the meaning of resilience by reflecting on the story of Arpi Krikorian, who believes that sharing the joyful aspects of culture and heritage are strong acts of resilience to overcome historical tragedies.

### Enduring Understandings



- The act of making, displaying, and/or performing art can make survivors and descendants of a traumatic event more resilient.
- Art can build resilience by celebrating the culture, identity, and survival of the survivors and/or descendants of a traumatic event.

### Artist Information

Arpi Krikorian is an Armenian artist who lives in California. Arpi uses art to represent the resilience of her Armenian culture and heritage and to celebrate the strength and resilience of the Armenian people.

### Additional Testimonies

Two supplemental testimonies are provided in the activity to build on the enduring understandings present in Arpi’s video.




<p><a href="#">Jirayr Zorthian</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Alyce Vanley</a></p> 
<p>Jirayr, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, describes memories of Armenian culture, including gatherings with singing and dancing, before the Armenian Genocide.</p>	<p>Alyce, a descendant of a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, describes with her daughter, Pat, how their Armenian identity and culture are reflected in their art.</p>

### Extension Ideas

The following extension ideas can help encourage students to extend their exploration of the key themes presented in this video topic series activity:

- Have students view another testimony on empathy from the options below. As students watch the testimony, have them complete a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the speakers' stories related to the enduring understandings from Arpi's activity.
- Encourage students to reflect on personal experiences of resilience and express them through art using a personal resilience journal. Students can begin their personal resilience journal with a structured free-writing activity in class where students reflect on and write about their personal resilience experiences. Then, encourage students to express their resilience experiences through various art forms of their choice.
- The Armenian Genocide may be a new topic for some students. Encourage students to further investigate the Armenian Genocide using the Armenian Genocide Brief History from IWitness (included as a handout at the bottom of this Educator Guide). Have students compare what they have learned about the Armenian Genocide with what they may have already known.

### Additional Testimonies on Resilience and Culture

<p><a href="#">Halina Nelken</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Haiastan Terzian</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Herschel Balter</a></p> 
<p>Halina remembers how, against all odds, music and art were used to develop inner strength in the ghetto.</p>	<p>Haiastan reflects on a song that was sung on the road to Gyojruk (present-day Lake Hazar, Turkey), where Armenians were being taken to be killed.</p>	<p>Herschel describes singing with other inmates in the barracks of Auschwitz-Birkenau.</p>

## Activity 2: Lual Mayen

### Overview

In this activity, students will explore the connections between art and resilience through the story of Lual Mayen, a refugee who creates video games and launches his own business while surviving the traumatic experience of growing up in a refugee camp. Students will analyze Lual's story, discussing key themes like empathy, the importance of storytelling, and resilience.

### Enduring Understandings

- When facing adversity, art can create agency for the individual and empower others.
- The act of making, displaying, and/or performing art can demonstrate and inspire resilience in the artist and others.
- Celebrating culture, identity, and stories of survival through art can build empathy and inspire future generations to honor and protect others.

### Artist Information

Lual Mayen is a video game designer and the CEO of Junub Games. Lual creates video games based on his family's experience living as refugees in Uganda. Lual finds video games to be a powerful storytelling tool through which he can inspire and promote resilience in others.

### Additional Testimonies

One supplemental testimony is provided in the activity to build on the enduring understandings present in Lual's video.

#### [Rose Schwartz](#)






Rose Schwartz, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, shares her experience as a child and how music helped her survive difficult circumstances during the Holocaust.

## Extension Ideas

- A significant theme in Lual’s story is the power of video games as a tool for storytelling and how storytelling can promote empathy and understanding for others. To explore the power of storytelling, encourage students to reflect on inspirational stories of resilience in their own lives or communities, and create a series of visual art pieces (comic strips, illustrated storybooks, etc.) to depict these stories and share them with others.
- Use the additional testimonies linked below to further unpack key themes related to Lual Mayen’s story. Encourage discussion about how these stories from history reflect and further reinforce the enduring understandings that celebrating culture, identity, and stories of survival through art and storytelling can build empathy and inspire future generations to honor and protect others.
- After students conclude the video topic series activity for Lual Mayen, create an opportunity for them to share their artistic products (created during the Lual activity) with members of the school and local community through a community art expo. While students prepare for the art expo, encourage them to highlight elements of their art that represent challenges and triumphs, preparing to share with others how personal stories through art can foster empathy and resilience.

## Additional Testimonies on Resilience and Empathy

<p><a href="#">Arne Christiansen</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Floyd Dade</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Itka Zygmuntowicz</a></p> 
<p>Arne reflects on why he decided to help Danish Jews escape to safety in Sweden.</p>	<p>Floyd Dade describes how the strength of the Jewish people inspired him to see the light in darker times.</p>	<p>Itka remembers surviving because of the friendship and spiritual resistance she shared with Bina, a girl she met in Auschwitz-Birkenau.</p>

## Activity 3: Mona Golabek

### Overview

In this activity, students will explore the relationship between art and resilience through the story of Mona Golabek, the daughter of Lisa Jura, a Holocaust survivor. Students will investigate the importance of resilience and how, through resilience, courage, and artistic expression, students can also inspire and support resilience in others.

#### Enduring Understandings

- When people face adversity, having the courage to create art and help others do the same strengthens one's resiliency.
- Making and sharing art can show and inspire strength and resilience in both the artist and others.
- Brave acts of celebrating culture, identity, and survival through art can remind us of our humanity and inspire future generations to protect it.

### Artist Information

Mona Golabek is a concert pianist who wrote the 2002 book *The Children of Willesden Lane* about her mother's experience with the *Kindertransport* during the Holocaust. Inspired by her mother's experience and stories of resilience, Mona uses her artistic gifts as a writer and concert pianist to inspire resilience and courage in others.

### Additional Testimonies

One supplemental testimony is provided in the activity to build on the enduring understandings present in Mona's video.

#### [Esther Bem](#)






Esther describes the courage of a family to take her and her family in for a few days, then find a new place for them to live when they could no longer keep them.

## Extension Ideas

- Host a supplemental class discussion to unpack the idea that courage and resilience are conscious choices made by individuals facing challenges. During this discussion, ask students to reflect on what courageous choices they have made or they have seen others make, considering how these choices have impacted themselves and others.
- Use the additional testimonies linked below to investigate the role of courage in resilience. Ask students to identify how the resilience shown in each testimony results from conscious choices made by individuals. Ask students to share how the stories of courage and resilience in these testimonies can be mirrored in their own lives to inspire others.
- Have students reflect on someone whose resilience inspires them. It may be someone they know personally, someone from the provided testimonies, or another individual who has shown resilience. Encourage students to create a piece of art inspired by that individual's resilience and then share it with others, identifying how the art captures the person's spirit of resilience and courage.

## Additional Testimonies on Inspiring Resilience and Courage

<p><a href="#">Alice Boddy</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Alicia Appleman-Jurman</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Sol Liber</a></p> 
<p>Alice describes how she had the strength to travel and register herself for the Kindertransport and face changes in her life by always believing in herself no matter what.</p>	<p>Alicia describes when her house was attacked. She recognizes one of the attackers, and she makes a speech to him that causes him to leave.</p>	<p>Sol describes his involvement in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Poland in 1943.</p>



## Brief Histories

*This brief history has been adapted from the [USC Shoah Foundation's IWitness Brief History on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1923](#), and leveled for an upper-primary student audience.*

## The Armenian Genocide, 1915-1923

### What Happened?

In 1914, a country called the Ottoman Empire joined the First World War. The Ottoman Empire was led by a group called the Young Turks, who wanted to create a country only for Turkish people. The Young Turks did not like that there were Armenian Christians living in their country, and in 1915, the Young Turks decided to forcibly remove all Armenians from the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks did this by forcing the Armenians to leave their homes, hurting them, and not giving them food or shelter. Many Armenians were made to walk through deserts without food or water, and along the way many people died from hunger, thirst, or violence.

### How Did it Happen?

In 1915, over 200 Armenian leaders were arrested and later killed by the Young Turk government. After that, many Armenian men were separated from their families and killed. Women, children, and older people were forced to leave their homes and walk for long distances in terrible conditions, and many of them also died.

Some Armenians survived by being forced to convert to a different religion, forced to be adopted by other families, and some others were helped by kind neighbors or people from other countries.

### What Happened After?

The Ottoman Empire lost the First World War and was taken over by other countries in 1918. Some of the Young Turk leaders responsible for harming Armenians were put on trial and found guilty, but most were never punished, and soon a new leader emerged to create a new country called Turkey.

In 1923, Turkey was created, but many Armenians had already been killed. It is estimated that about 1.5 million Armenians were killed between 1915 and 1923. Even today, the Turkish government continues to refuse to admit that this genocide happened, even though overwhelming evidence including scholarly research and testimony from survivors and witnesses reveal that it did.

### Remembering What Happened

There are still stories and memories from people who lived through the Armenian Genocide. These stories, like the testimonies shared as part of this video topic series, have often been recorded in videos and books to help others learn about what happened and to make sure it is not forgotten.