

Stories of Strength: How Art Inspires 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.

Activity 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. Students will also continue their analysis by considering the connections between Lual's experience and that of a Holocaust survivor, noting the relationship between art and resilience in diverse historical events. Students will conclude by creating their art project to express their knowledge of how art can foster resilience in themselves and others in their community.

Educator Note: *Students should watch Lual Mayen's video before this activity begins. Students should also be introduced to the term "resilience" and have a working understanding of its meaning prior to this activity.*

Target Audience

Grades 3–5

Activity Duration

Two 45–60 minute sessions

Essential Questions

- What does it mean to be resilient?
- How can art be used as a tool to build and support resilience?
- Why is resilience an important trait?
- How does art help to celebrate culture?

Materials

- Handout: Values, Identities, and Actions Organizer
- Handout: Analyzing Artistic Resilience
- Handout: Compare and Contrast

Procedure

Procedure Note: To ensure students have enough time to unpack key themes, the sections below can be completed as separate activities across multiple days as needed based on class time available. For example, the Ask section might be completed within one class with the Analyze, Apply, and Act sections to follow during the next class.

Ask

- Begin class by stating that today students will be exploring the relationship between art and resilience, and that they will begin by watching Lual Mayen's short video.
- Provide each student with a copy of the **Values, Identities, and Actions Organizer** and ask students to begin the activity by reflecting on the values, identities, and actions that are present in Lual's story as they watch the short film.
- As students conclude their **Values, Identities, and Actions Organizer**, encourage them to extend their thinking by making specific connections to the key themes from Lual's story by reflecting on this question: *Why did Lual decide to create video games as his form of art?*
- Provide students with a few minutes to prepare their responses to this discussion question and provide a turn-and-talk opportunity for any students who may need a thinking partner to unpack the question and identify themes.
- After students independently reflect, host a whole-class discussion to identify the key themes from Lual's story and their relationship to resilience and art.

Educator Note: Before beginning the discussion, take a moment to define the term resilience. It may be helpful at this point to provide students with a definition like "being able to be happy, successful, etc. again after something difficult or bad has happened." Students might use this time to brainstorm the key terms of this definition, what the "etc." in this definition might be meant to include, and/or how it relates to Lual's story.

- Once students have prepared their responses to the discussion question (Why did Lual decide to create video games as his form of art?) and the class has unpacked

and defined the term resilience, host a whole-class discussion where students share their responses to the discussion question and use those responses to unpack key themes present in Lual's story. Key themes that students may recognize in Lual's story may include:

- The importance of empathy (e.g.: using his mother's story as the basis for one of his video game storylines)
- The unique ability of video games to tell stories, and the power of storytelling as a form of art
- Creating a community through his efforts (e.g.: others playing his game together, others around the world sharing his game)

■ **Educator Note:** *Students may also identify additional themes like courage (e.g.: courage is required to have the strength to share your story) or humanity (e.g.: choosing to share stories of strength or kindness and connecting with others through video games) related to the identified themes of empathy, storytelling, and resilience. These additional student-identified themes can also be incorporated into this activity as they are identified.*

Analyze

- Divide the class into small groups and provide each student with a copy of the **Analyzing Artistic Resilience Handout**. Groups will use the handout to consider what they can learn from Lual's story.

Educator Note: *At this point, it may be helpful to either replay Lual Mayen's story for all students to view or provide students with direct access to view Lual Mayen's video as they work to develop detailed responses to the guiding questions on their handout.*

- Analyzing Lual's story will open students' thinking toward other examples of how art played an important role in other traumatic events such as the Holocaust.

Apply

- Students will extend their inquiry into art and its relationship to resilience by analyzing Rose Schwartz's testimony. Rose's testimony calls attention to the power of art in building resilience during the Holocaust, and her story supplements Lual's as Rose's testimony shares her perspective as a child during the Holocaust and introduces the importance of music as a form of artistic expression.

[Rose Schwartz](#) (2:19) Rose Schwartz, a Jewish survivor, shares her experience as a child and how music helped her survive difficult circumstances during the Holocaust.

- Before viewing testimony as a class, help strengthen the experience by explaining that students are going to compare Rose and Lual's story to better understand the connection between art and resilience.
- Provide students with a copy of the **Compare/Contrast Handout** and explain that they should use what they learn from Rose's story to complete her side of the circle, noting examples of how art has impacted her life.

Before playing the testimony, explain more about Rose Schwartz's life story using her biography located at the end of the lesson.

- After showing the testimony, project the handout for the class to see and together complete the Venn diagram and supporting questions. As students share their thoughts, help guide them to see similarities and differences in their stories and the way art has played a powerful role in both their lives.

Act

- To conclude the lesson, students will identify their own opportunities for action to connect what they have learned about the relationship between art and resilience through the creation of a final art product of their choosing.
- To set up this activity, write/display the following question for students: *How can art encourage resilience in myself, my community, and around the world?* Share with students that they will now create an artistic product of their own that shows their answer to this question while also referencing what they learned from Lual and Rose's stories.
- Students might choose to create an array of artistic products, including but not limited to visual art (posters, drawings, flyers, etc.) written expression (short stories, poetry, song lyrics, etc.), multimedia art (video, their own video game storyboard, etc.).
- As students create their final art product, encourage them to reference at least two themes from Lual and Rose's stories and identify how the art and resilience examples provided through Lual and Rose's story inspired their final product.
- If appropriate, conclude the activity by allowing students to share their final art product either through individual student presentations or through a Gallery Crawl activity.

Connection to Student's Lives	Connection to Contemporary Events	Connection to the Future
Students will develop their knowledge of the relationship between art and resilience, especially during traumatic events, and identify how art can reaffirm humanity by celebrating culture, identity, and survival of the survivors and/or descendants of that event.	Students will analyze contemporary examples of the relationship between art and resilience by critically reflecting on the key themes present in Lual Mayen's story in this video topic series.	Students can use their knowledge of the relationship between art and resilience and the importance of art to reaffirm humanity by celebrating the culture, identity, and the survival of traumatic events to inform future advocacy efforts to support resilience in themselves and others in their community.

Survivor & Witness Biographies

Rose Schwartz (born Rose Halpert) was born in Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia) in 1926. Rose's family was Jewish, and they lived on a farm with four sisters and two brothers and attended public school with Jewish and non-Jewish children. When the German army invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939, Rose was sent to live with her aunt where she worked in a brick factory and learned Hungarian songs during the war. Rose believes the music she learned to sing helped her survive. After the war, Rose was married and moved to the United States. Rose was interviewed and shared the story of her experience in 1995.

National Standards and Frameworks

College, Career and Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

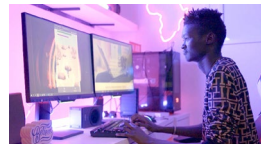
- D2.Civ.6.3-5. Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.
- D2.Civ.10.K-2. Compare their own point of view with others' perspectives.
- D2.Civ.14.K-2. Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.
- D2.Civ.14.3-5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.
- D2.His.6.3-5. Describe how people's perspectives shaped the historical sources they created.
- D2.His.16.3-5. Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.
- D3.1.3-5. Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, structure, and context to guide the selection.
- D3.4.3-5. Use evidence to develop claims in response to compelling questions.
- D4.3.K-2. Present a summary of an argument using print, oral, and digital technologies.
- D4.7.K-2. Identify ways to take action to help address local, regional, and global problems.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.7: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.3: Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.5: Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

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.](#)

Values, Identities, and Actions Organizer



STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: After viewing Lual Mayen's video, think about key values, identities, and actions you saw in his story.

Values

- What values do you notice in Lual's story?
- How do Lual's values compare to your values?

Values are the kind of things people value, and they may or may not be specifically mentioned in the video: safety, traditions, creativity, respect, etc.

Identities

- What is the story that Lual is trying to tell?
- Who is the audience Lual is trying to speak to?

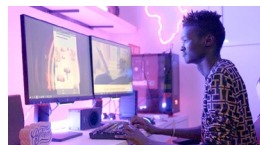
Identity can be experiences, beliefs, traditions, etc., that make someone who they are.

Actions

- What actions might Lual be trying to inspire through his story?
- Whose actions—are they your actions, the actions of others, or both?

Actions are the things people do to make an impact on themselves or others.

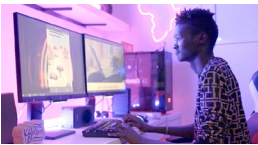
Analyzing Artistic Resilience



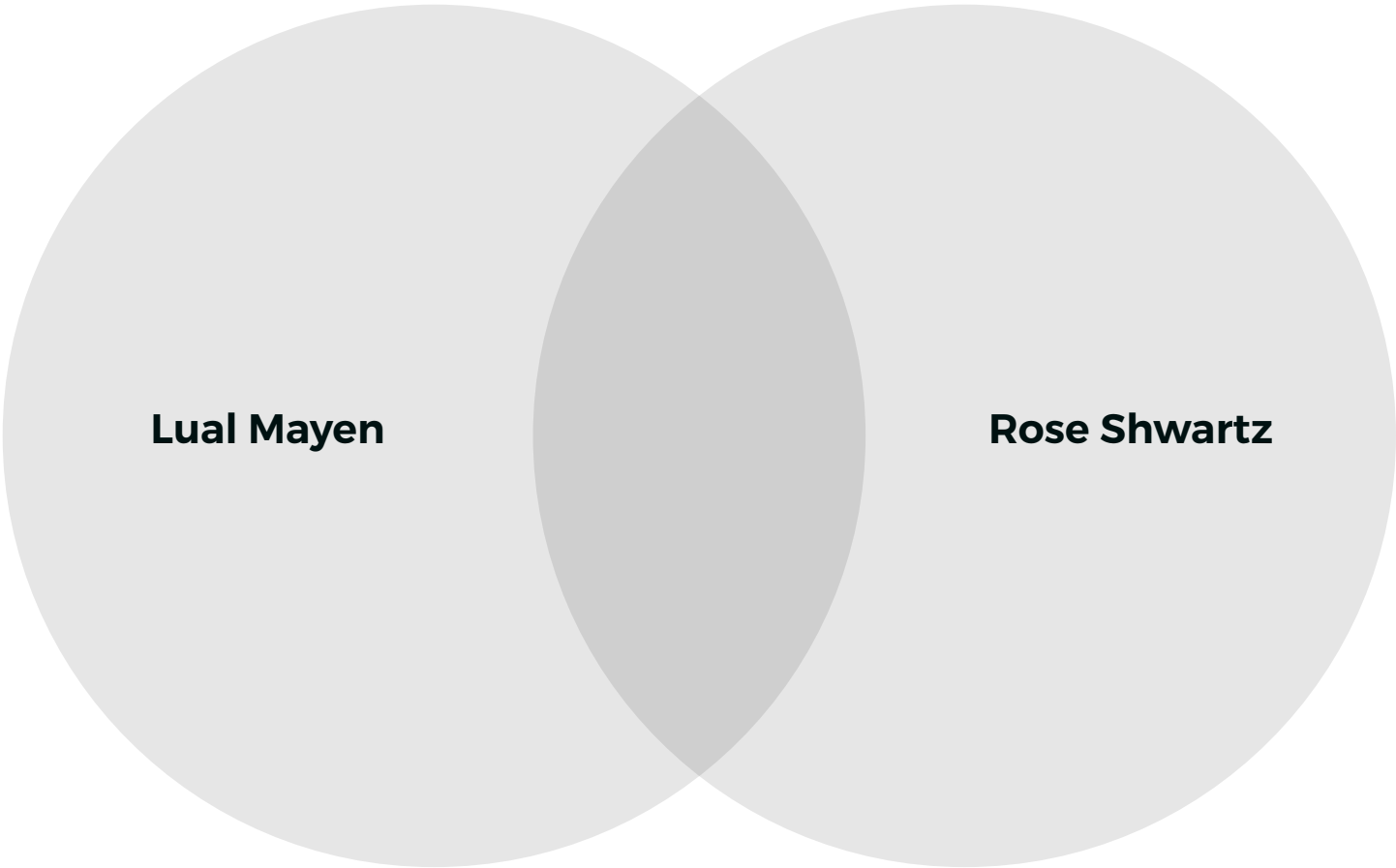
STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: Use the organizer below to explore the key themes and important messages in Lual Mayen's story.

Guiding Questions	Your Response
	In each response, provide at least one specific piece of evidence from Lual's story to support your answer.
How did Lual's experience in the refugee camp inspire him to create Junub Games?	
How can video games help inspire others?	
Why was the storytelling role of video games important to Lual?	
What were the challenges that Lual faced? What can this teach you about resilience and overcoming challenges?	
How did art create opportunities for Lual to share his story and help others?	
How did Lual's connection with others help those in his community? Why is it important to consider how our actions can impact others?	



Topic Focus: _____



How are the two stories similar?

How are the two stories different?