

In This Issue



A Tribute to Giovanni Palatucci and Righteous Heroes of the Holocaust

In recognition and honor of Giovanni Palatucci, the Anti-Defamation League is pleased to offer a new lesson plan for students to learn about the life of Palatucci and other rescuers who faced grave personal danger to save thousands of Jewish lives in the Holocaust. Giovanni Palatucci displayed extraordinary courage at a time when the world was indifferent to the heinous acts of genocide occurring in Europe in World War II. Learning about men and women like Giovanni Palatucci helps students consider the moral choices that must be made by ordinary individuals in the face of injustice. Giovanni Palatucci, and others like him, serve as an example for young people, and are an inspiration for them to stand up to bigotry in their schools, communities, and beyond.

Rationale: The purpose of this lesson is for students to learn about the life of a Holocaust rescuer, Giovanni Palatucci, who took extraordinary risks to rescue Jews from persecution and death. (Palatucci was later captured by the Nazis and sent to Dachau, where he died just two months before the camp was liberated in 1945). This lesson plan encourages students to consider Giovanni Palatucci's motivations for his heroic actions, and to learn about the actions of other *Righteous Among the Nations*. Students are challenged to consider whether the motivation to be an ally is within the reach of every human being, regardless of religious or cultural differences.

Objectives:

- Students will learn about the life of Giovanni Palatucci through biographical study, and will conduct independent research on the lives of four additional Holocaust rescuers.
- Students will analyze acts of intervention and rescue, and reasons for altruistic responsiveness to acts of genocide during the Holocaust.
- Students will develop a greater understanding of Yad Vashem's memorial to the *Righteous Among the Nations*.
- Students will create a memorial to the everyday heroes in their lives that display the courage and commitment to stand up for others.

National Standards:

Civics

- Understands ideas about civic life, politics, and government
- Understands the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited governments
- Understands the sources, purposes, and functions of law, and the importance of the rule of law for the protection of individual rights and the common good
- Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights
- Understands how certain character traits enhance citizens' ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities

History

- Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns
- Understands the historical perspective

Language Arts

- Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
- Gathers and uses information for research purposes
- Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process
- Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Life Skills

- Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument
- Uses various information sources, including those of a technical nature, to accomplish specific tasks
- Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences
- Contributes to the overall effort of a group

Age Range: Grades 8 – 10

Requirements:

Handouts/Supporting Documents:



[Handouts/Supporting Documents:](#)

(Click on the link above for a master pdf file with all of the handouts or click on any individual title below for an html version of that single handout.)

- [A Brief Biography of Giovanni Palatucci \(1909 - 1945\)](#)
(.pdf format - 357 KB - requires [Acrobat Reader](#))
- [Glossary of Terms](#)
(.pdf format - 90KB - requires [Acrobat Reader](#))
- [Short Guide to Writing an Ethnography](#)
(.pdf format - 89 KB - requires [Acrobat Reader](#))
- [Short List of Resources for Research on Holocaust Rescuers](#)
(.pdf format - 43 KB - requires [Acrobat Reader](#))

Other Materials: chart paper, markers, masking tape, journals (one for each student)

Time: 45-60 minutes or 1 class period for Part I. Part I engages students in an activity that can serve as a stand alone class exercise appropriate for younger students with an introductory understanding of the Holocaust. Parts II and III may also serve as stand alone exercises, but times will vary dependent upon individual research and writing assignments incorporated in the lesson. Parts II and III are designed for more advanced classes that seek to expand on their knowledge of the Holocaust and the altruistic responses of rescuers and resisters. Educators are encouraged to read through all parts of this lesson to determine the most appropriate activities for their grade level.

Techniques and Skills: analyzing biographical documents, analyzing maps, case study, connecting past to present, conducting ethnography, cooperative group work, critical thinking, forming opinions, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, reading skills, research skills, using the Internet, writing skills

Key Words: ally, ambassador, anti-Semitism, attorney, Auschwitz, collaborators, commuted, concentration camp, conspiracy, consul, Dachau, deportation, detainment, emigrated, exile, extermination camp, Gestapo, Holocaust, impending, indifference, inspector, internment camp, Nazi, occupy, persecution, port, Provincial of the Franciscan Order, refugee, rescuer, righteous, stereotype, treason, tyranny, visa

Procedures:

Note: It is important that students have an introductory level understanding and knowledge of the Holocaust before proceeding with this lesson. The following links provide background information that may be useful:

- [Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust](#) (Anti-Defamation League)
- [Holocaust Awareness and Remembrance® Institute](#)
- [Holocaust Glossary](#) (Anti-Defamation League)
- [Introduction to the Holocaust](#) (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)
- [Learning about the Holocaust through Art](#) (World ORT)
- [The Holocaust: Definition and Preliminary Discussion](#) (Yad Vashem)

Part I (45-60 minutes or 1 class period)

1. Read the following quote to students, and hold a class discussion using some of the questions provided below:

"The road to Auschwitz was built by hate, but paved with indifference." - Ian Kershaw

- What do you think this quote means?
- What was Auschwitz? What is "the road to Auschwitz" a metaphor for?
- What is *indifference*? How was the "road to Auschwitz" paved with indifference?
- Why do you think so many were indifferent to what was happening to Jewish people, and other targets of hate and violence during the Holocaust?
- Are there examples of people who chose not to remain indifferent, who instead chose to help Jews and others targeted by the Nazis?
- If so, why do you think they chose to take action when most others remained indifferent? What different motivations do you think they may have had?

2. Divide students into groups of 4.

3. Instruct students that they will begin learning about the different motivations of Holocaust rescuers by studying the life of one Holocaust rescuer who refused to remain indifferent, and consequently saved thousands of Jewish lives. Distribute the following handouts, one to each student: [A Biography of Giovanni Palatucci \(1909 - 1945\)](#) (357 Kb) and [Glossary of Terms](#). (90 Kb)

4. Ask each group to read through Giovanni Palatucci's biography, and to discuss the following questions in their groups:

- How did Giovanni Palatucci extend aid to Jewish people during the Holocaust?
- Was Palatucci offered any material compensation in return for his aid?
- What were the dangers and risks faced by Palatucci at the time?
- What do you think were the individual qualities or reasons that inspired Giovanni Palatucci to rescue thousands of Jewish lives?

5. Once students have read the biography and discussed their answers, hold a class discussion using the following questions:

- What struck you most about the life of Giovanni Palatucci?
- What is an *ally*?
- What are some qualities of an ally?
- In the midst of mass indifference to the millions of victims of genocide, why do you think Palatucci chose to be an ally, to save the lives of others despite the risks and dangers to his own life?

Part II (Time for independent assignments and group work will vary)

6. Inform students that each group member will have an opportunity to conduct a research study to compare and contrast the acts of resistance of four different Holocaust rescuers, and their different motivations to be allies. Inform students that within their groups of 4, they will each be responsible for independently researching and writing a short biography (1-2 pages) on the four Holocaust rescuers listed below (Step 7), one per group member. Students will conduct independent library and internet research, and will complete their writing assignments as homework. Students will then return to their groups upon completion of their individual assignments to compare and contrast biographies using discussion questions provided below (Step 8).

7. Distribute one copy of the [Short List of Resources for Research on Holocaust Rescuers](#) (48 Kb) handout to each student to aid their independent research process. Group members should collaboratively decide which of the four Holocaust rescuers each student will research.

- A. Oskar Schindler
- B. Renee Scott
- C. Chiune-Sempo Sugihara
- D. Raoul Wallenberg

Within the body of each biography, students should seek to incorporate answers to the following questions:

- How did this Holocaust rescuer extend aid to Jewish people during the Holocaust?
- Did she or he receive any material compensation in return for her/his aid?
- What were the dangers and risks faced by this Holocaust rescuer at the time?
- In the midst of mass indifference to the millions of victims of genocide, why do you think this Holocaust rescuer chose to be an ally to save the lives of others, despite the risks and dangers to her/his own life?

8. Once students have completed their writing assignments, ask each group to reconvene, and compare the biographies of the Holocaust rescuers. Groups should compare and discuss their responses to the following questions:

- How were the experiences of Giovanni Palatucci, Oskar Schindler, Renee Scott, Chiune-Sempo Sugihara, and Raoul Wallenberg similar or different?
- Are the personal qualities and motivations that inspired these individuals to be rescuers similar or different?
- Based on your research, can you identify specific motivations or personal qualities that inspire some people to stand up for others, even in the face of grave danger?

9. Hold a class discussion and chart responses using the following questions:

- What do you think motivates some people to be allies, even in the face of grave danger and risk?
- Do you see any of these qualities exhibited by people in your own lives?
- Do you think every human being is capable of being an ally?

10. Give the following journal assignment to each student for homework:

Read the following two quotes, and write in your journals a response to the questions below:

There are two kinds of heroism, the one that arises from an unexpected need or impulse, and Palatucci's: an everyday heroism that repeats and confirms itself to the certainty of danger to which it risks. The chief of police could not have ignored the risk and he was too involved in the security mechanism not to realize. He acted knowing that he was heading to his own sacrifice; for him, it was merit to give his life for just one man - Amos Luzzatto, President, Group of Italian Jewish Communities

I have a chance to do a little bit of good, and people are truly grateful to me for it...Apart from this, there is nothing special about me to tell you. - Giovanni Palatucci

- Amos Luzzatto describes Giovanni Palatucci as an everyday hero. Do you think Giovanni Palatucci saw himself as an everyday hero? Why or why not?
- Do you see people in your own life that repeat and confirm their commitment to being an ally to others in the face of certain risk or danger to themselves? If so, please describe.
- Do you think of these people in your life as heroes? Why or why not?
- Do you see yourself as one of these people? Do you see yourself as an ally? Why or why not?

Part III (Time for group work and individual projects will vary)

11. Hold a class discussion on the following questions:

- Why do you think it is important to learn about and remember the people who acted in heroic and righteous ways during the Holocaust?
- What are some ways to honor and recognize these people who were heroes?

12. Explain to students that a memorial was created in Israel to honor the heroes that risked their own lives to save Jewish lives, and to commemorate the six million Jews that perished during the Holocaust. Ask students if they have heard of, or know what "Yad Vashem" means? (If they do not know, tell students that Yad Vashem means "monument" or "memorial"). Explain that in 1963, Yad Vashem formed a commission to officially appoint the title "Righteous Among the Nations" to any person who faced personal danger and risk to save the lives of others during the Holocaust.

13. Divide students into their original groups of 4. Ask students to visit the website of [Yad Vashem](http://www.yadvashem.org) to research and discuss the questions below. (Note: If it is not possible for students to conduct Internet research in school, print out and distribute pages from the [Yad Vashem website](http://www.yadvashem.org).)

- How does Yad Vashem determine whether to appoint the honor of "Righteous Among the Nations" to a person?
- Would you add any points to the list of criteria?
- What honors are bestowed onto those who are recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations"?
- Thinking back on your homework assignment, do you think it is important to remember and honor the people in your own lives who act in heroic ways everyday? In what ways can they be recognized?

14. Inform students that they will have an opportunity to acknowledge and honor the everyday heroes in their own lives. Present the following long-term project to the students:

Building a Wall of Honor: Students build a "Wall of Honor" in their classroom (or in another location in their school) for the everyday heroes in their own lives. Inform students that they will choose one person they consider to be an everyday hero, and will develop a short ethnography and/or a documentary about that person. Students may use the [Short Guide to Writing an Ethnography](#) (89 Kb)handout as a guide for conducting an ethnography of their everyday hero; it may also be used as a guide for students who choose to interview their everyday hero on film. Students then create a photo collage wall exhibit

displaying their everyday heroes. In addition to photos, the collage may include primary documents, short descriptions about the everyday heroes, and any other artifacts relevant to their lives. For students who choose to conduct a documentary of their everyday hero, the films may also be shown in class.

Follow-up Topics & Activities:

1. Assign readings with first-hand accounts of Holocaust rescuers, such as [In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer](#) (Random House, ISBN: 0385720327) or [TO SAVE A LIFE: STORIES OF HOLOCAUST RESCUE](#) (University of Illinois Press, ISBN: 0-252-02515-6)
2. Assign readings about the country-wide effort in Denmark to save Danish Jews during the Holocaust, such as [Darkness over Denmark: The Danish Resistance and the Rescue of the Jews](#) (Holiday House, ISBN: 0823414477), or [Number the Stars](#) (Laurel Leaf Books, ISBN: 0440227534).