

A Study Guide For

We Must Remember



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We Must Remember

Synopsis

Country of Origin: United States
Release Year: 2008
Original Language: English
Director: Douglas Green Student Production Team
Runtime: 32 minutes
Themes: Holocaust, student activism, civics.

We Must Remember charts the year-long effort of 16 high school students from Carlsbad High School (CHS) to answer the question “what do you really know about what happened” during the Holocaust. After doing extensive historical research and interviewing several survivors, the students travelled to the German concentration camp of Dachau to see first-hand the barracks, gas chambers and crematoria where thousands perished. They also interviewed German high school students their own age about the legacy of guilt they have inherited from their grandparents’ generation. Based on their initial footage, the students received over \$100,000 in funding from various organisations that allowed them to travel to Washington D.C. to film at the Holocaust Museum while it was closed to the public and to travel back to Germany and Poland to expand on their footage. This time, the students visited Auschwitz and Birkenau camps with their German counterparts. The combination of archival footage, interviews with survivors, German students and American soldiers who participated in the liberation of the concentration camps make for an absorbing documentary that offers teachers and students a valuable introduction to studying the Holocaust. Moreover, the footage that the students captured of a recent neo-Nazi rally in Germany underscores the importance of studying the Holocaust and learning from the lessons of the past.

Related Website: <http://www.clickoncarlsbad.com/Stories/chstv08.html>

Curriculum Applicability

We Must Remember is relevant to a number of courses across the curriculum from History through to Media Studies particularly Grade 10 Civics (CHV20); Canadian History Since World War One (CHC2D) and World History: The West and the World (CHY4U/C). Teachers of Media can also use the film with their students to explore the techniques used by documentary filmmakers to convey their point of view.

Studying the Documentary Genre

We Must Remember offers students a unique opportunity to explore the challenges in making a documentary because the film is made by high school students like themselves. As the young filmmakers struggle with decisions such as what to call the film and how to best convey their extensive research, viewers become aware of the highly constructed nature of documentary filmmaking. Before viewing the film, teachers should explore the documentary genre with their students and familiarise them with some of the different types, styles and conventions of documentary films. Listed below is a brief outline of some of the key features of documentaries that students should consider. For a comprehensive look of documentary types, styles and conventions, students could refer to the following website:

<http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/learning/diydoco/>

Types, Styles and Conventions

(From Andrea Hayes, *Cambridge VCE English Units 1&2*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2006)

Documentaries can be:

- Event driven
- Issue driven
- Character centric
- Experiment driven
- Slice of life
- Recreated scenarios

Different documentary styles include:

- Commentator (filmmaker or someone comments on the action, e.g. Michael Moore)
- Fly on the wall (camera runs uninterrupted and footage is later edited)
- Essay style (stylised film to represent filmmaker's point of view on an issue).
- Dramatisation (recreated historical or famous event)
- Cinema verite (truth with camera operator as part of the action)
- Propaganda (explicit purpose of influencing an audience to a point of view. These films are often commissioned by organisations).

Documentary conventions:

- Narrator
- Talking heads (interviews)
- Subjects talking to camera
- Voice-over
- Photographs
- Music
- Facts
- Different perspectives of people, events or facts presented
- Live footage
- Archival footage

- Different settings
- Themes/issues
- Hypothesis about a central theme/issue on which a documentary is based
- Director's perspective or expressed opinion
- Graphics
- Animation

Which of the above-mentioned styles and conventions does *We Must Remember* use? Students should draw up a list of techniques that the filmmakers use to convince viewers that they need to learn from the lessons of the Holocaust. They should also consider the following questions:

1. What are the issues/themes raised in the film?
2. Who is the target audience for the film?
3. What is the main question/hypothesis posed by the filmmakers?
4. What do you think are the filmmakers' perspectives on the subject of the Holocaust?
5. Do the filmmakers offer alternate perspectives?
6. Do the filmmakers offer any potential solutions to the problems identified in the film?
7. What response do you think the filmmakers want to elicit from the audience?
8. What techniques do the filmmakers use to persuade the audience that the Holocaust must be studied by students for generations to come?

Cinematic Techniques (from the *Skinny film kit*, ©Andrea Hayes, 2005)

In order to develop an understanding of how meaning is created visually, students need to familiarise themselves with the language of film. Below is a list of basic cinematic techniques. Students should identify where the directors of *We Must Remember* use some of these conventions and discuss how they are used to convey their message.

Camera Shots

Extreme long shot (ELS): allows viewer to see subject in relation to surroundings, places things in context (aka establishing shot, wide shot).

Long shot (LS): whole body but not much of surroundings.

Mid shot (MS): from the waist up.

Close-up (CU): head and shoulders – concentrates attention on an important detail (e.g., reaction shot).

Extreme close-up (ECU): focus on one body part - adds intrigue, can be disconcerting.

Camera Movement

Pan shot: (panoramic): camera rotates horizontally around a fixed position.

Tilt shot: camera moves vertically around a fixed position.

Tracking shot: camera moves horizontally on a dolly (rails).

Crane shot: camera can be raised, lowered and moved horizontally (aerial shot, e.g., above crowd).

Handheld: camera is held in hand rather than on a tripod and can follow action (sometimes called **wobblecam** if unsteady).

Helicopter shot: ultimate aerial view (e.g., of city scape)

Zoom: shot that goes from wide to close up quickly.

Camera angle

Eye level: horizontal; makes audience feel like part of the action, can create intimacy.

High angle: provides general overview; shows subordinate position.

Low angle: dominant position, shows character in power.

Angled shot: can provide distorted view (technique often used in film noir)

Editing: rearranging of images and sound to tell a story. Editing can allow scenes to be repeated, offer different perspectives or create tension.

Framing: How the subject is composed within a frame. How big is the subject in the frame? Subjects can be looking directly at the camera or looking off-camera. The camera may be positioned above or below the subject's eye level.

Cut: a simple transition between two shots that have been joined together.

Cross-cutting: editing shots of events in different locations that are expected eventually to coincide with one another.

Dissolve: a transition from one shot to another by fading out the first shot as the second shot fades in.

Jump cut: an edit when a section of the footage is cut out from a shot when the camera has not changed its angle. It looks like an obvious jump to your eye.

Subtitles: letters or words that appear onscreen.

Montage: editing together various shots that are not continuous but create meaning.

Freeze frame: the moving image suddenly comes to a standstill (like a photograph), often signals the end of a film.

VFX: visual effects created with computer technology.

Time lapse photography: technique whereby each film frame is captured at a rate much slower than it will be played back. When replayed at a normal speed, time appears to be moving faster and thus lapsing. Processes that would normally appear too subtle for the human eye (e.g. a flower opening) become highly pronounced.

Diagetic sound: sound originating from the world within the film (dialogue, action sounds, e.g. car horn).

Non-diagetic sound: sound that has its source outside the film (e.g. music, voice-overs).

Ambient sound: background sound recorded at location when there is no dialogue or movement.

Music: creates mood in a film

Voice-overs: added in postproduction and are used to anchor meanings and guide audience.

Suggested Activities/Questions:

1. Construct a wall chart listing examples of the above listed techniques employed by the directors of *We Must Remember*. Which ones did you think were most effective? Why?
2. Watch a clip with the soundtrack turned off and then watch it again with the sound. Discuss how the soundtrack helps to convey the message.
3. Construct a running sheet, dividing the film into individual scenes/segments. Discuss the way the filmmakers edited their footage, paying particular attention to how they alternate between archival footage, interviews with different people and their own responses to what they were learning. How might the message of the film been altered if the students chose to edit it differently?
4. Draw a chart listing each of the people that the filmmakers interviewed, including themselves (Refer to Appendices 1, 2, and 3). Include direct quotes from each subject. Who do you think is the most convincing? Why? How does each person offer a different kind of credibility to the argument that students must continue to study the Holocaust? Discuss how the message of the film may have been altered if any one of those people interviewed were not included.

Introductory Activity: Niemoller Poem

We Must Remember begins with a version of a well-known poem written by a German anti- Nazi activist, Pastor Martin Niemoller:

In Germany they came for the Communists,
and I did not speak out –
Because I was not a Communist

Then they came for the Socialists,
and I did not speak out –
Because I was not a Socialist

Then they came for the Jews,
and I did not speak out –
Because I was not a Jew

Then they came for me,
and there was no one left to speak for me

The above poem is an effective springboard to exploring the issues raised in the film particularly as they relate to issues of civic responsibility. To begin with, students could do some research on Martin Niemoller, a pastor who was initially supportive of the Nazis but who later renounced his conservative, nationalistic beliefs to become a pacifist and vocal anti-war demonstrator. To learn more about Neimoller, students could consult the following websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Niem%C3%B6ller

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/GERniemoller.htm>

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007392>

Questions About the Poem

1. Why do you think that the filmmakers chose to begin their film with this poem? Do you think it is an effective beginning? Why/why not? How else might they have begun the film?
2. Who is the target audience for the poem?
3. What is the message of the poem?
4. What values does the poem promote?

Related Activities:

Divide students into groups and have each one find one or two examples of a contemporary song or poem that deals explicitly with human rights and social justice (Rap songs provide a rich resource for this kind of activity). Make copies of each of the songs/poems collected and distribute them to the class. Allow students sufficient time to read them carefully and answer the following questions:

1. What is the theme of the poem/song? Where is it expressed most clearly?
2. What images reinforce the message of the poem/song?
3. What is the historical context of the poem/song?
4. Who is the target audience for the poem/song? Are there people who might disagree with the ideas and sentiments expressed by the writer?
5. Do you think that the poem/song is effective? Why/why not?

Students might also want to consider writing their own poem or song describing an aspect of human rights and oppression in our own society. Any original work should come with a written statement outlining how the poem/song relates to the concept of human rights and social justice as well as detailing the major themes and background to the poem/song.

Breaking the film into Segments

Students studying this film might find it helpful to break the film into discrete segments and look at each one individually. The year-long project undertaken by the filmmakers can be divided into five separate phases:

Phase 1: Learning, preparation and research

Phase 2: First trip to Europe, Dachau concentration camp and interviews with German students

Phase 3: Back in America, Holocaust Museum in Washington

Phase 4: Second trip to Europe, visit to Auschwitz/Birkenau, reunion with German students and visit to Dachau with them

Phase 5: Back in America, reflection on the year and the project

Below is a list of guided questions for each of the above-listed phases.

Phase One: Preparation and Research

1. "What do you really know about the Holocaust?", asks one of the students in the film. Students viewing the film should answer this question themselves before continuing watching. What is the effect of the archival footage used as the filmmakers list some of the facts and statistics about the Holocaust? Why do you think they chose to include this footage to accompany these facts?
2. "Why would we want to learn more about something that happened so long ago and so far away?" Why do you think it is important for today's students to learn about the Holocaust?
3. Why do you think that the filmmakers had such a difficult time choosing the right title? Why do you think they finally settled upon "We Must Remember"? Can you think of a different title that might be just as effective?
4. How is the archival footage that accompanies the witnesses' testimonies designed to impact on the viewer?

Phase Two: First Trip to Europe

1. A significant portion of the footage shot in Dachau focuses on the students' own reactions to what they are seeing. Why do you think they chose to focus on their reactions rather than the sights themselves?
2. Why do the students mix footage of the museum at Dachau today with archival footage of Dachau during the War?
3. How do the German students interviewed respond to the Holocaust? What is the reaction of the American students to their response?
4. Do you think that the German students are conveyed in a sympathetic light? Why/why not? Provide specific examples to support your response.
5. Why do you think the students pose the question "Could somebody like Hitler rise to power in the world we live in today immediately after interviewing the German students?"
6. Why is the above question followed by footage from the National Democratic Party demonstration? What reaction do the filmmakers hope to elicit from the audience by including this footage? How effective do you think they are in getting that response?

Phase Three: Holocaust Museum in Washington

1. Why do you think that the filmmakers chose to deal with the issue of Holocaust deniers at this particular point in the film? How effective are they in refuting those who claim that the Holocaust never happened?
2. What reaction do the filmmakers hope to elicit by juxtaposing the Holocaust deniers' arguments with photographic images from concentration camps?
3. Compare the scenes filmed in the Holocaust museum in Washington with the scenes filmed at the Dachau camp. Which do you think are more effective? Why?
4. Why do you think the filmmakers chose to interview Irmgard Allard at this point in the film? What is your response to her claim that Germans were too busy trying to survive themselves to worry about what was happening to others? How might your response to her differ had the filmmakers followed her comments with the ones made by the Dachau historian who argues that many Germans "just didn't want to know"?

Phase Four: Back to Europe

1. In what ways have the students changed between their first trip to Europe and the second? Provide examples to support your response.
2. Why did the filmmakers want to include the German high school students that they met on their first trip on their second visit to Dachau?
3. How do the German students respond to their visit to Dachau? Have their attitudes towards the past changed after their visit?
4. Do you think that the German and American students have learnt to understand each other better over the course of the two visits? Provide evidence to support your response.

Phase 5: Reflection

1. What are the various attitudes towards forgiveness expressed by the different survivors?
2. "How does one comprehend that which is beyond comprehension?" How successful are the filmmakers in conveying the horrors of the Holocaust?
3. What lessons have the filmmakers taken away from their experience?
4. How effective are the students in convincing their audience that we must remember the Holocaust?
5. Why do you think that the filmmakers chose to give the final word of the film to a survivor who claims that she "did not allow the Nazis to murder [her] spirit"?
6. How does the song that plays over the closing credits reinforce the message of the film?

Post-Viewing Activity

At the end of *We Must Remember*, one of the students comments that genocide is still occurring in our lifetime. Divide students into five groups to research acts of genocide that have occurred in the last century in Armenia, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur. Students should present their research to the rest of the class. Finally, the class should decide on a group initiative designed promote civic engagement and take action against ongoing human rights violations around the world. To this end, they should follow the seven steps to social action listed below:

Seven Steps to Social Action

(Adapted from www.oambassadors.org/educators)

Step One: Find a cause you care about.

Brainstorm with students about an issue or cause that is important to them. In order for them to really care about social issues, they need to empathise with people affected by the issues. Films such as *We Must Remember* personalise the issue of the need to learn from the lessons of the Holocaust. Teachers can also rely on newspaper articles, guest speakers and stories to bring an issue to life for students. Have students scan current newspapers and magazines for stories about people in need and brainstorm how they might contribute as a class.

Discussion Questions:

What makes you angry?

What makes you speak your mind?

What do you wish you could change about the world?

How do you think you help to bring about this change?

Step Two: Do your research

Once the class has determined which issue they would like to address, students must ensure that they are well informed of the details and complexities of their chosen cause. To this end, they must make a list of questions and find answers by doing as much research as possible. Students should consult textbooks, media sources, websites and experts in order to learn as much as they can about their cause.

Guiding Questions:

How current is your information? Ensure that your facts and statistics are the latest available.

How reliable are your sources? This is especially important with regard to information gleaned online. Students should consider if their site is linked to a reliable organization or institution.

How balanced is the information they are receiving? Are all points of view on an issue being represented?

Step Three: Build a dream team

Assign specific tasks based on a person's individual strengths. Students could divide themselves into groups based on specific character traits that they feel best describes their personalities:

Creative/artistic types who are imaginative

Doers who are energetic

Reasoners who are well organised

Communicators who can build bridges between different groups and encourage team work

Guiding Questions:

What makes a good leader?

What adjectives would they use to describe an ideal leader?

What are my particular strengths and how can I apply them to a leadership role?

How should a leader behave towards others?

Step Four: Meet around the round table

Choose a time and place for people to get together. Ensure that the students convening the meeting have a written agenda and specific goals outlined. Students should share the research they have done on their issue (see step 2) with the group and devise a plan of action that gives each person a particular job to do.

Guiding Questions:

Do you have a clear agenda for your meeting?

Have you made sure that you have given everyone in the group a chance to express their ideas and opinions?

Have people left this meeting with a clear sense of their individual responsibilities within the group?

Step Five: Make a plan of action

The best way to set goals is to break your cause into a group of manageable tasks which differentiate long-range goals from short-term ones. For example, if your cause is the plight of refugees, you might want to think about one country on which you would like to focus. Once these goals have been determined, students need to draw up a plan of action which can be broken into specific tasks such as organising fund raising events, distributing supplies with the money raised, etc.

Guiding Questions:

What is your goal?

Who can help you reach your goal?

What will your team need to do to reach your goal?

What challenges may you encounter? How can you overcome them?

Step Six: Problem solving

Once students have come up with their initial plan, they will need direction and support with regard to implementation. It would be useful for the group to look at other student-run initiatives to get ideas on how they might organise their project and how they can keep their goals realistic.

Guiding Questions:

What is the scale of your project? Is it realistic and appropriate?

Can you accomplish your goals within a particular time frame? You need to ensure that your activities fit into the school calendar.

Do you have the tools/equipment necessary to implement your project?

Step Six: Take action

Once the meetings have taken place and the tasks assigned, it's time to implement your plan of action and find ways to make global issues relate to your community. For example, sponsoring a 5 km fun run at your school can raise student awareness about the genocide in Darfur while helping to provide funds to charities that provide humanitarian aid in Darfur.

Guiding Questions:

Has your activity/program been successful in raising awareness of your issue?

Have you ensured that you have provided participants with the chance to provide you with meaningful feedback?

Has your activity/program been successful in recruiting more volunteers who want to help you reach your long-term goals?

Were there any surprises?

What did you learn from the experience?

Step Seven: Have fun

While your goal is to raise awareness about a serious issue, people respond best to others who are enthusiastic about their work. If people see you having fun, they will want to be part of whatever it is you are doing. To this end, make sure that your meetings are enjoyable (a little bit of food goes a long way in meeting this goal), and that your activity/project creates opportunities for people to forge new friendships. Don't forget to celebrate your achievements. Teachers can help by acknowledging students' efforts in assemblies and school websites/newsletters. School yearbooks are also an ideal place to chronicle your hard work and honour your victories.

Appendix One: Holocaust Survivors Interviewed

Name of Survivor	Direct Quote	Accompanying Images	Impact on Viewer
Horst Cahn			
Frances Gelbart			
Rose Schindler			
Gerhard Maschkowski			
Yaja Boren			
David Kampinski			
Lou Dunst			
Edith Eger			
Lucia Miller			

Appendix Two: Students Interviewed

Name	Direct Quote	Accompanying Image	Impact on Viewer
American Student One (Select one of the 15 interviewed)			
American Student Two (Select one of the 15 interviewed)			
American Student Three (Select one of the 15 interviewed)			
German Students			
Hannah			
Markus			
Johanna			
Daniella			

Appendix Three: Other People Interviewed

Name	Direct Quote	Accompanying Images	Impact on Viewer
Camp Liberators			
James Stephens			
Walter Maurer			
Academics			
Harold Marcuse			
Dirk Riedel			
German War Survivor			
Irmgard Allard			

References

All websites cited are from August 2009

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Hayes, Andrea, *Skinny film kit*, © 2005

<http://www.clickoncarlsbad.com/Stories/chstv08.html>

<http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/learning/diydoco/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Niem%C3%B6ller

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/GERniemoller.htm>

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007392>

www.oambassadors.org/educators