

Suggestions for classroom warm-up activities

Encouraging students to take part in discussions about ethical issues in general and such related to the Holocaust might be challenging. Below you can find suggestions for warm-up activities you can practice with your class to help students relieve inhibitions or tensions and get the conversation going.

[Classic icebreakers- Group-interaction exercises for middle-school students](#)

Going on a trip: The students form a circle, and one starts by saying, for example: "I'm going on a trip, and I am taking a hug". The student on the right gives the speaker a hug, and then it is their turn to repeat the sentence and add another gesture. The game is over when the first person does all the gestures of the group.

The Machine The students form a circle, and the first student begins by making any motion and accompanying sound. It must be something that they can repeat over a few minutes. Then someone else adds another part to the machine, specifically, a motion and sound that works in reaction to the first motion and sound. Then someone else adds in another part and then another. This activity can serve as an illustration of the interconnectedness of society and its members.

[Content-related activities: Open up the topic of the session with high-school/ University students](#)

See, Think, Wonder: Before watching the film, select one or more still images from it. Share the image with students by providing copies or by projecting or displaying it in the classroom. Lead students slowly through the following six steps, pausing between each step to give them significant time for thinking and writing:

- Ask students to look deeply at the picture. Have them observe shapes, colors, textures, the position of people and/or objects, etc.
- Have students write down what they see without making any interpretation about what the picture is trying to say.
- Ask students: What questions do you have about this picture that you would need to have answered before you can begin to interpret it? Ask as many questions as you have.
- Have students discuss their questions with two other students in the class to try to find some answers.
- Given the historical context and subject of the piece, ask students what they think the artist is trying to say (what does the piece mean), and who they think is the intended audience?
- Discuss your interpretation with the class, and be prepared to support your view by referring to specific elements of the image and what you know about the history of the time.

Alphabet Brainstorm: To stimulate discussion after students watched the film and see what they took away from it, select a related Topic (e.g. immigration, propaganda, war, genocide) or focus on the film itself as the focus of the activity. Ask students to write the alphabet down the left-hand side of a piece of paper, and list one related thought, association or issue related to the topic that starts with each letter. After the finish, discuss what themes they noticed, what was included and what was left out. The activity can be done individually, in small groups, or as a whole-class activity.

What would you do if...? Teachers describes different situations, and the students have to answer with their supposed reactions. These could also be dramatised, drawn, etc. Examples for situations: What would you do if you had to go into hiding? What would you do if you had to leave home tomorrow?

Stick Figure Quotes: Ask students to identify brief quotations in the film by or about a specific character. You can have students choose a character or you might assign them one. Tell students that the quotes they choose can include descriptions, dialogue, observations from other characters, etc. Tell students to sort the quotes or passages they have collected by considering these factors:

- Which is most central to your character's identity or representative of his or her core values?
- Which describe ways in which the character influences the world around him or her?
- Which are more from the head, and which are more from the heart?

Tell students that they will now use the quotes they've found to create a stick figure representation of their character, and place the quotes next to the body part they think correlates best with them (head, heart, hand etc.) Ask students to explain their choice.

Four Corners/ Barometer: Label the four corners of the room with signs reading "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." Alternatively, place only "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" signs at opposite ends of a continuum in your room. Generate a list of debatable statements related to the material being studied. Examples of effective "Four Corners" statements

- The purpose of schooling is to prepare youth to be good citizens.
- The needs of the larger society are more important than the needs of the individual.
- Individuals can choose their own destiny; their choices are not dictated or limited by the constraints of society.
- One should always resist unfair laws, regardless of the consequences. I am only responsible for myself.
- After a community has been through a time of conflict or violence, it is better for everyone to move on and forget the crimes or hardships of the past.
- An eye for an eye leaves everybody blind.

After students have considered their personal response to the statements, read one of the statements aloud and ask students to move to the corner of the room that best represents their opinion, or position themselves between the two ends. Once students are in their places, ask for volunteers to justify their position. When doing so, they should refer to evidence from history, as well as other relevant information from their own experiences. Encourage students to switch corners if someone presents an idea that causes a change of mind. After a representative from each corner has defended his or her position, you can allow students to question each other's evidence and ideas. Before beginning the discussion, remind students about norms for having a respectful, open discussion of ideas.

Sources:

- Patricia Arancibia, Teacher Training Program, HIA Poland
- Facing History and Ourselves - Teaching strategies
- Viola Spolin, Theatre Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1986. Print.