Humanization of the Concentration Camps, as Viewed by an American Soldier

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ACTION PLAN FOR INTERVIEWING (API)
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California University of Pennsylvania
Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources
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§ I. PENNSYLVANIA TEACHING STANDARDS

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening
1.4.11. B. Write complex informational pieces; Using Primary and Secondary Sources

History
8.2.12 D. Synthesize historical research.
8.1.12 C. Evaluate historical interpretation of events.

§ II. INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING MODEL

A. Planning: Have students work in groups to discuss the emotional impact on an American Soldier during the liberation of the concentration camps during World War I.

B. Retrieving: Research recorded and written interviews of other World War I veterans who participated in the liberation of camps.

C. Processing: Reviewing the research, understand the emotional impact of soldiers participating in liberation and how it has affected their military and civilian lives.

D. Creating: Develop interview questions for a WWI Veteran based on the processing step and conduct an oral history.

E. Sharing: Have students share the information learned through classroom presentations in commemoration of DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE for Holocaust victims, April 11, 2009.

F. Reflection: Each student will identify aspects of the interview that impacted them emotionally.

§ III. DESCRIPTIVE WALK-THROUGH OF MY ACTIVITY

In the planning stages of this activity, the teacher will organize the students in each class into small groups of four to five students. Each group of students will be required to work together throughout the interview process as one unit. To commence this project, the students will discuss the impressions that they already have regarding the Nazi concentration camps used during World War I. In addition to their opinions and impressions, they will use their prior knowledge of facts to formulate predictions on the short term emotional impact a WWI Veteran may have after liberating a concentration camp. They should discuss how the soldiers may have reacted to the people found alive in the camps, as well as the bodies that were discovered. In addition, the students should forecast what they believe the emotional ramifications may have been for those veterans in the long run.

During the retrieving stage, the students shall research prior interviews of World War II Veterans who had participated in the liberation of said camps. These recorded and written interviews will be researched by the students using the teacher’s guidelines for accuracy. Each group will be
responsible for finding one personal interview to share with the class as a whole. The retrieving stage of this activity will be allotted one week of class time.

The retrieving stage will be broken into two phases. Using the mobile laptops in the classroom the students will be given three class periods to research the time period of World War II, concentration camps, returning home from war, and recorded veteran interviews. This will be stage one of research and data retrieval. In the second stage, the fourth and fifth days of classroom prep, the students will share their findings with the teacher. The teacher will check that each group is progressing and that they are locating sufficient information. The students will organize their materials and determine if further research is necessary.

The following websites have been located by the teacher and are deemed appropriate in content for this project. There are numerous interviews that will aid the students in developing interview questions and learning a sense of how the interviewee may respond.

- Veterans History Project Digital Archive: CCSU Center for Public Policy & Social Research
  http://content.library.ccsu.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=any&CISOBOX1=II.&CISOFIELD1=CI SOSEARCHALL&CISOOP2=all&CISOBOX2=veterans--&connecticut--interviews&CISOFIELD2=subjec&CISOROOT=/VHP&t=s

- Novi High School: Interviews with World War II Veterans
  http://hs.novi.k12.mi.us/ww2/interview.html

- Veterans History Project: Mariemont City Schools
  http://www.mariemontschools.org/veterans/wwii%20a-l.htm

In the **processing stage**, each student group will thoroughly read and listen to each piece of material gathered for the project. They will use this stage as a guide in aiding to formulate their interview questions that will be designed in the creating stage. The students should give consideration to the types of questions being asked in prior interviews, the emotions shown in pictures, the frequency of questioning, whether the interviewer uses a script or memory, the location of the interview, and other environmental factors that may have attributed to a successful or unsuccessful interview. The students should compare their predictions of a veteran’s emotions earlier in the planning stage to what they have seen in the recorded interviews.

The **creating stage** will require a great deal of individual work among the students. At this stage, the students should create the outline of questions that they would like to ask a World War II Veteran in order to complete the oral history. Additionally the students should decide what recording software will be used, what type of audio equipment will be utilized, and stage an optimal setting for the interview. The World War II Veteran will be selected by the teacher from personal contacts. The teacher will share personal information with the students in the form of a short biography. This information will contain the veteran’s date of birth, hometown, branch and rank in the military during WWII, medals awarded, marital status then and now, and where they served during the war. The students will prepare their interview form by staging some of the basic information about their veteran. Having prior biographical
information on the veteran will alleviate wasting time on questions that are already answered. Additionally, the students will quickly develop an interest and rapport with the veteran. The teacher will ask the veteran to bring any mementos of the war along to the interview. These may include photos, medals, or souvenirs.

The students will formulate a set of ten interview questions per group. With five student groups, each group will be assigned an interview topic. Group One shall ask questions regarding the Veteran’s pre-war status. Group Two will learn about the veteran’s life during the war; Group Three will ask questions regarding the liberation of the concentration camps. Group Four will focus on the veteran’s return home following the war, and Group Five will look into the veteran’s life today and how the war has affected daily life some 65 years later. Each group will prioritize their questions in the event that time restraints do not allow for all questions to be answered. The teacher will stress the importance of having many questions so as not to have too much down time.

The interview topics will be broken in these categories along with sample questions:

- **Group I – Pre-War:** What influenced your decision to enlist in the military? What was your family structure at the time? Were you single or married? What was your previous job? What is your highest level of education?

- **Group II – War:** On what base were you stationed? Were you awarded any medals during battle, wounded in battle and where? Were you aware of the Nazi concentration camps?

- **Group III – Liberation of Concentration Camps:** What emotions did you face going into camp? Were you fearful or proud? Were you well-received or were the prisoners afraid? Discuss the conditions, the smell.

- **Group IV – Return Home:** How were you treated? Did you have a job to return to at home or did you stay in the military? Was it difficult to return to civilian life? Were you surprised by things that you read in the newspaper or heard on the radio about the war?

- **Group V – Family Life Now:** Are you married? Do you maintain relationships with military friends? Do your memories of the concentration camps affect your personal life now? Did it then? Did you encourage your child to be part of the military? Do you tend to watch WWII television programming or do you find it offensive and inaccurate?

Once each student group has formulated their group of questions, they will submit each list to the teacher for approval. As a class, the order of questioning will be determined and they will participate in a mock interview. The teacher will serve as the ‘veteran’ for this purpose. In this situation, the students will practice asking their questions and utilizing the microphones and recording equipment, Audacity. This will allow the students the opportunity to rewrite their interview questions if they lack
fluency or change the wording if pronunciation is an issue. After the mock interview, the teacher will invite the veteran to the classroom to participate in a live interview forum with the students.

The **sharing stage** will take place during the class following the interview. The student groups will create key points on what they had learned from their interview. They will share this information in a round robin forum with the other class groups. Students may benefit from creating outlines to share with the groups and will be permitted to use the overhead or other media devices.

The **reflection stage** shall be a private phase of this project. Reminding the students of the somber nature of the situation, they should take some quiet time for reflection. Using student journals, the students will write their thoughts, emotions, and what they have learned throughout this process and what they learned during the sharing stage of the process.

§ IV. **MY ASSESSMENT TOOL**

The assessment tool for this interview will be a series of events. The students will be graded on all steps of the process for an overall grade. The following rubric will be utilized for grading this project:

**Group Work** ______/30

* use of technology in retrieval and recording interview
* created a minimum of 10 interview questions according to Group Number
* each student took equal work load

**Sharing** ______/30

* Thoughtful, answers to questions
* able to connect data to biographical information
* provide handout/written information to peers

**Reflection Journal** ______/30

* minimum one page in length, spelling, grammar
* reflections of what was learned
* reflections of the emotional impact on the student