

*Alicia: My Story*  
**Lesson Plan for Chapter 21**  
**“The Brecha”**

**TITLE:** Think of the Children

**TOPIC:** The Holocaust

**GRADE LEVEL:** High School

**SUBJECT:** World History

**RATIONALE:**

In this lesson, students will understand the special vulnerabilities underwent by the “unwanted children” during the era of the Holocaust in how the Nazis advocated for the killing of these groups in accordance with their ideological views so ultimately help students more fully understand why/how the Nazi war machine worked and why it eventually went to war with the world.

**INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE(S):**

Students will be able to:

- Discuss the special vulnerabilities underwent by the “unwanted children” during the era of the Holocaust.
- Explore how the Nazis advocated for the killing of these “unwanted” or “dangerous” groups in accordance with their ideological views.

**NCSS THEME(S):**

- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environments

**FLORIDA SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD(S):**

**SS.912.A.6.3**

*Analyze the impact of the Holocaust during World War II on Jews as well as other groups.*

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD(S):**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1**

*Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.*

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6**

*Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.*

**MATERIALS:**

- Internet access
- Access to a sizeable projector or SmartBoard
- IWitness video-testimony
- PowerPoint presentation (see attachments)
- The book *Alicia: My Story* (preferably a copy per student)

**PREPARATIONS:**

- Create an IWitness account to access the video-testimony.
- Read the testimonies and the U.N.'s *Declaration of Children's Rights* prior to teaching the lesson to obtain a firm grasp of what each testimony is about and what rights were violated in the testimonies.
- Read through the PowerPoint presentation to allow that you're only taking cues from it, not reading it from the screen.
- Assign students to read, at a minimum, *Alicia: My Story* chapter 21; preferably, though, the entire book up through the chapter.
- Have IWitness video-testimony cued & ready to show.

**LESSON:****Introduction (5 min)****What Does "Childhood" Mean?**

1. Ask each student to write down **three sentences** that best define a child, in their opinion.
2. Call on 5-7 students to share their sentences with the class.

**Learning Strategy #1 (15min)****Mini-lecture on the Jewish Child in Nazi Ideology**

1. See PowerPoint presentation

**Learning Strategy #2 (20 min)****Analyzing the Jewish child during the Holocaust: Extracts of Testimonies**

1. The instructor and students will read aloud together in class **two** testimonies written by Jewish children during the Holocaust.
2. Together, examine the United Nation's [\*Declaration of the Rights of the Child\*](#), 1959, and then find together the clauses from the Declaration violated in the testimonies.

**Closure (10 min)**

1. After reading the testimonies and finding any violations of children's rights according to the United Nations document, give you and your students **five minutes** to share any final questions, comments, and/or concerns about the content.
2. Students will take the last **five minutes** of class to write down— in a poem format of their choosing— two types of fates these "unwanted" children experienced during the Holocaust and explain one reason as to why they suffered in these ways.
3. Collect students' poems at the end of class so to do an informal assessment of the students' comprehension of the content.

**ELL Accommodations**

- Ability to listen to native-English speakers
- Having the opportunity to speak/practice English
- Heavy use of visual aids.

**Extensions**

To further extend the lesson to present day, connect the children of the Holocaust and the Nazi's violation of their basic human rights to today's issue of child trafficking. The following link accesses a child trafficking worksheet to print out and give to each student to complete after you conclude this lesson:

[http://teachunicef.org/sites/default/files/documents/child\\_trafficking\\_activity\\_sheet.pdf](http://teachunicef.org/sites/default/files/documents/child_trafficking_activity_sheet.pdf)

**REFERENCES:**

Appleman-Jurman A. (1988). *Alicia: My Story* (pp. 337-359). New York, NY: Bantam Books.

teachunicef.org. *Ending Child Trafficking*. In *www.teachunicef.org*. Retrieved March 23, 2014

un.org. *Declaration Of the Rights Of the Child*. In *www.un.org*. Retrieved March 3, 2014

ushmm.org. *Children During the Holocaust*. In *www.ushmm.org*. Retrieved March 3, 2014

yadvashem.org. *Children In the Holocaust*. In *www.yadvashem.org*. Retrieved March 3, 2014

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

- PowerPoint presentation slides

## Agenda

1. Briefly discuss what “childhood” means.
2. Mini-lecture on the special vulnerabilities experienced by the children of the Holocaust.
3. Read two testimonies written by Jewish children of the holocaust and then see what children’s rights were violated according the United Nation’s *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*.
4. Briefly share any final thoughts, comments, and/or concerns on the content of today’s lesson.
5. On a notecard, explain two types of fates these “unwanted” or “dangerous” children experienced during the Holocaust and give one reason as to why they suffered in these ways.

## Children of the Holocaust

**BIG IDEA:** In this lesson, you will understand the special vulnerabilities underwent by the “unwanted children” during the era of the Holocaust in how the Nazis advocated for the killing of these “unwanted or “dangerous” groups in accordance with their ideological views.

# Hook

## What Does "Childhood" Mean?

- Write down **three sentences** that best define a child, in your opinion.



# Think of the Children

Children of the Holocaust Era

## Adult-Child Relationships – Natural and Self-Evident?

- What are things that children need?
- Who should provide them with these things?
- Is it natural to provide children all of their needs?
- Are all children provided with their basic needs?



## The Jewish Child in Nazi Ideology

*"One of the policemen was very annoyed and said: '...No Jew kid is entitled to keep a bicycle anymore. The Jews aren't entitled to bread, either; they shouldn't guzzle everything, but leave the food for the soldiers...'"*

-Heyman, Eva *The Diary of Eva Heyman – Child of The Holocaust*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1988, pp. 70-73 .

**Stop & Think:** Based on this particular diary entry, how do you think the Nazis felt about Jewish children?

## Children of the Holocaust

- Children were especially vulnerable in the era of the Holocaust.
- Nazis advocated killing children of “unwanted” or “dangerous” groups in accordance with their ideological views, either as part of the “racial struggle” or as a measure of “preventative security.”



An emaciated child eats in the streets of the Warsaw ghetto. Warsaw, Poland, between 1940 and 1943.  
— US Holocaust Memorial Museum

## Children of the Holocaust

Jewish teenage boys fighting against Nazi forces as part of the Jewish Partisan group.



- The Germans and their collaborators killed children both for these ideological reasons and in retaliation for real or alleged *partisan attacks*— member(s) of an organized body of fighters who attack or harass an enemy, especially within occupied territory; a guerrilla (e.g., the Jewish partisans fighting against Nazi forces).



## Children of the Holocaust

- The Germans and their collaborators killed as many as 1.5 million children including:
  - Over a million Jewish children
  - Tens of thousands of Romani (Gypsy) children
  - German children with physical and mental disabilities
  - Polish children
  - And children residing in the Soviet Union



## Children of the Holocaust

- The chances for survival for Jewish and some non-Jewish adolescents (13-18 years old) were greater, as they could be deployed at forced labor camps.





## Children of the Holocaust

- The fate of Jewish and non-Jewish children can be categorized in the following way:
  - 1) children were killed right as they entered the death camps
  - 2) children were killed immediately after birth or in institutions
  - 3) children born in ghettos and camps who survived because prisoners hid them
  - 4) children, usually over age 12, who were used as laborers and as subjects of medical experiments
  - 5) those children killed during so-called anti-partisan operations



## Children of the Holocaust

- In the ghettos, Jewish children died from starvation and exposure as well as lack of adequate clothing and shelter.
- The German authorities were indifferent to this mass death because:
  - 1) the Jews were considered “enemies” of the Aryan race
  - 2) they considered most younger children to be unproductive



## Children of the Holocaust

- Because children were generally too young to be deployed at forced labor, German authorities generally selected them along with the elderly, ill, and disabled, for the first deportations to killing centers, or as the first victims led to mass graves— dug by the aforementioned that could— to be shot.



## Children of the Holocaust

- Non-Jewish children from certain targeted groups were not spared either.
- Examples include:
  - Romani (Gypsy) children—5,000 to 7,000 killed as victims of the “euthanasia” program
  - Children murdered in reprisals; retaliation against partisan attacks
  - Children in villages in the occupied Soviet Union who were killed with their parents



A Soviet child next to his murdered mother. A concentration camp for civilians, Belarus.

## Children of the Holocaust

- Nazi physicians and medical researchers used a number of children, including twins, in concentration camps for medical experiments that often resulted in the deaths of the children.



www.auschwitz.org

## Children of the Holocaust

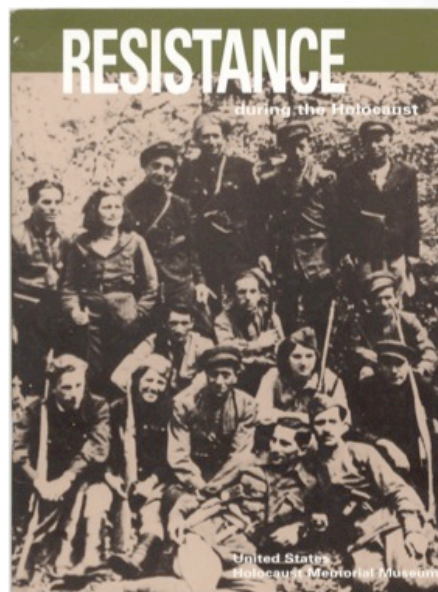
- In their "search to retrieve Aryan blood," SS race experts ordered hundreds of children in occupied Poland and the occupied Soviet Union to be kidnapped and to be adopted by racially suitable German families.
- The basis for these decisions was "race-scientific," often blond hair, blue eyes, or fair skin was sufficient to merit the "opportunity to be Germanized."





## Children of the Holocaust

- Other children in youth movements later participated in underground resistance activities.



## Children of the Holocaust

- Still, many other children escaped with parents or other relatives -- and sometimes on their own -- to family camps run by Jewish partisans.



Nathan Offen, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, describes the final mass execution during the Cracow ghetto liquidation in Poland in 1943 and explains how he survived it.

## Extracts of Testimonies

- Now we've established some background knowledge on how these "unwanted" children of the Holocaust suffered, let's take it a step further by reading together two testimonies written by children of the Holocaust and discover what they'd experienced during this horrific time in history.

### Eva Heyman

Eva was born and raised in Hungary. Her parents managed to flee to Switzerland, but Eva was caught and sent to Auschwitz with her grandparents. She was murdered there at age 13.

**April 5, 1944** "...later, in the afternoon, on my way to Grandma Lujza, I met some yellow-starred people. They were so gloomy, walking with their heads lowered. ...Still, I noticed Pista Vadas. He didn't see me, so I said hello to him. I know it isn't proper for a girl to be the first to greet a boy, but it really doesn't matter whether a yellow-starred girl is proper or not. Pa, 'Eva,' he said, 'don't be angry but I didn't even see you. The star patch is bigger than you,' he said without laughing, just looking so gloomy... [Grandma Lujza] says she doesn't even care if she dies. But she is seventy-two, and I'm only thirteen. And now that Pista Vadas spoke so nicely to me I certainly don't want to die!"

## Eva Heyman

**May 10, 1944** "Dear diary, we're here five days, but, word of honour, it seems like five years. ...First, the fence was finished, and nobody can go out or come in. ...Actually, everything is forbidden, but the most awful thing of all is that the punishment for everything is death. ...It doesn't actually say that this punishment also applies to children, but I think it does apply to us, too...."

"We go to bed at 9 p.m. , dear diary, and from now on we are supposed to get up at five o'clock in the morning. This has also been ordered by the gendarmes who took everything away from us. I have no idea how things are going to be now. Every time I think; this is the end, things couldn't possibly be worse, and then I find out that it's always possible for everything to get worse, and even much much worse. Until now we had food, and now there won't be anything to eat. ...now they've taken the wood from the basement, and we won't be able to heat water to wash in any more."

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## Eva Heyman

**May 30, 1944** "...We even know already that we can take along one knapsack for every two persons. It is forbidden to put in it more than one change of underwear; no bedding. Rumor has it that food is allowed, but who has any food left? ...It is so quiet you can hear a fly buzz. ...dear diary, I don't want to die; I want to live even if it means that I'll be the only person here allowed to stay. I would wait for the end of the war in some cellar, or on the roof, or in some secret cranny. I would even let the crossed-eyed gendarme, the one who took our flour away from us, kiss me, just as long as they didn't kill me, only that they should let me live. "... [The last words in Eva's diary:] Now I see that the friendly gendarme has let Mariska come in. I can't write anymore, dear diary, the tears run from my eyes, I'm hurrying over to Mariska..."

## Bilha Shefer

- Bilha was born in Germany in 1932, and after "Kristallnacht" in 1938, she escaped with her family to Holland, where they were interned in the camp at Westerbork. From Westerbork, they were sent to Bergen Belsen, and from there they were sent via Turkey to Israel in a very exceptional one-time prisoner exchange agreement, in the framework of which Jews were exchanged for Germans who had been living in the Land of Israel (the Templars).

## Bilha Shefer

"What do I remember about the occupation as a child? One of the first things is that we had to wear the badge. I was eight and a half then. From the day I was born, a gold chain with a Star of David in a circle hung around my neck. My father put it around my neck when he first saw me. I never went anywhere without it."

"...I remember that we were two girl friends. The first day we went out with that badge, we also took out our chains (My friend also had a chain with the Star of David), and we walked proudly as Jewesses! I wasn't ashamed of the badge (the yellow star), on the contrary, I was proud."

"...Besides, I really had to make sure that every piece of clothing I wore had that badge..."

## Bilha Shefer

"...But there was always harassment, the danger that you could be arrested on the street... When I got to school, there was always the guessing game about who was there and who wasn't. There was something else in the general atmosphere, but from a child's vantage point, my entire problem was whether or not I would meet the Germans today. If I meet Germans, it's a bad day. If I don't, it'll be good. That was the basic philosophy of a 10-year-old girl... But aside from that, we were children and we tried to be happy..."

"Life continued at home without Father, my brother started doing all kinds of jobs in order to earn a living."

"Grandma drove us all crazy; she was very nervous. It was really hard for Mother to cope with her, but that's life. As time went on, the decrees became more frequent, and there were incidents all the time."

## Bilha Shefer

"Then came the evening when we were all at home. We heard noise and tumult from the street. We knew that it was coming from German trucks. We heard the commotion, the screaming and the crying. Then, by the time the Germans opened the door, my big brother had disappeared. The German read the list and called my brother's name. Then my mother said: (for me as a child, it came as a shock), 'He is not my son. Since his father hasn't been at home, I don't know him. He isn't here, he's independent. I don't know where he is.' But the sentence, 'He is not my son,' was a shock to me. I was so frightened. I have a brother just a bit older than I am and he said to me, '...Sshh... she's just saying that for them. Be quiet!' and my mother was totally indifferent..."

## Bilha Shefer

"During the entire time we were in Westerbork, we received packages from my brother (who was outside the camp with the Dutch underground). We also received letters. In the packages there were all kinds of things that would last – canned goods, jars of jam, chocolate bars.... When we arrived in Bergen Belsen, and were getting organized in the hut, they handed out tea and bread with the runny jam that became our staple food there, so Mother said: 'Let's get together here by the bed and eat something.'"

"Then the family gathered round and sat down. Mother then bent over her knapsack and pulled out a jar of the strawberry jam that I liked so much, and that my brother sometimes sent in the packages. It was a long time since we had received a package from my brother. Everyone was surprised and then Mother said: 'Mazal Tov – it's your Bat Mitzvah, your birthday.' In other words, I was 12 years old. Mother remembered to celebrate and had kept that jar in her bag. That was my Bat Mitzvah celebration. That was the day we arrived in Bergen Belsen."



# The Rights of the Children

Now that we have together read two deeply moving testimonies written by children of the Holocaust, let us now examine the United Nation's *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* and find the clauses from the Declaration that were violated in the testimonies.

## *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*

1. The child shall enjoy all the rights set forth in this Declaration. Every child, without any exception whatsoever, shall be entitled to these rights, without distinction or discrimination on account of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, whether of himself or of his family.
2. The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.

## *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*

3. The child shall be entitled from his birth to a name and a nationality.
4. The child shall enjoy the benefits of social security. He shall be entitled to grow and develop in health; to this end, special care and protection shall be provided both to him and to his mother, including adequate pre-natal and post-natal care. The child shall have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services.
5. The child who is physically, mentally or socially handicapped shall be given the special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition.

## *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*

6. The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents, and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security; a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother. Society and the public authorities shall have the duty to extend particular care to children without a family and to those without adequate means of support. Payment of State and other assistance towards the maintenance of children of large families is desirable.

## *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*

7. The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgment, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society. The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavor to promote the enjoyment of this right.

## *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*

8. The child shall in all circumstances be among the first to receive protection and relief.

9. The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form.  
The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development.

10. The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.



## Closure

- *Please feel free to share any final thoughts, comments, and/or concerns...*

## Closure

- You will take **the last five minutes of class** to write down- in whatever poem format you choose- TWO types of fates these “unwanted” children experienced during the era of the Holocaust and also explain one reason as to why they suffered in these ways.