

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING FILMS FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Selecting Holocaust films for educational use requires careful consideration to ensure that the material is historically accurate, age-appropriate, and promotes thoughtful reflection. Below are key criteria to consider:

1. HISTORICAL ACCURACY AND AUTHENTICITY

Ensure factual integrity: Films must align with established historical facts and avoid distortions or romanticized portrayals. They should present events, characters and situations as accurately as possible. Use films based on survivor testimonies, historical research, or reliable historical documentation.

2. EDUCATIONAL VALUE

Connect to key themes: The film should address essential Holocaust themes (persecution, antisemitism, resistance, rescue) or specific aspects of the Holocaust (e.g. life in the ghettos or camps, the role of resistance, pre-war Jewish life, bystander behaviour etc.).

Provide context: Films should align with curriculum goals and help students understand broader historical frameworks.

3. AGE APPROPRIATENESS AND SENSITIVITY

Match content to maturity: Avoid graphic violence, especially for younger students, while still conveying the Holocaust realistically. Personal stories or children's experiences during the Holocaust are best suited for younger students.

Pre-Screen: For older students, teachers should pre-screen films to prepare for difficult or graphic scenes. Use a trauma-informed approach to handle difficult subject matter with sensitivity.

4. BALANCE OF NARRATIVES

Focus on victim storytelling: Select films that center the experiences of Jewish victims and other targeted groups, avoiding stories that shift empathy toward the perpetrators or blur moral lines.

Highlight defiance and resistance: Choose films that show acts of Jewish defiance and resistance to counter stereotypes of victim passivity.

5. DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES

Show complexity: Select films that reflect the complex factors that influenced decision-making during the Holocaust and the wide range of responses without relying on stereotypes to explain human behaviour. (bystander, rescuer, victim, perpetrator)

Avoid good versus evil narratives: Films should present nuanced portrayals of human behaviour that neither romanticize heroic actions or, conversely, overemphasize the worst of human behaviour.

Represent multiple victim groups: While Jews were the primary victims of the Nazis, films that explore the persecution of other targeted groups can deepen understanding about Nazi ideology.

6. CRITICAL THINKING OPPORTUNITIES

Foster discussion and encourage reflection: Choose films that raise questions about moral responsibility, human behaviour and individual choices.

Supplement with educational resources: Choose films that have teaching guides, discussion questions, or reflective prompts to aid classroom discussion.

Provide contextual background: Offer materials or lessons to provide historical context and help students better understand the events of the Holocaust.

7. ENGAGEMENT THROUGH STORYTELLING AND VISUALS

Use engaging narratives: Films should captivate students with well-crafted storytelling and creativity, without compromising historical truth.

Include documentary formats: Mix feature films with documentaries to show different ways of representing Holocaust history.

SOME RECOMMENDED FILMS

GRADE 3+

- *The Tattooed Torah*, 2020 (22 minutes)
 - *The Number on Great Grandfather's Arm*, 2018 (19 minutes)
 - *Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey*, 2020 (15 minutes)
 - *Monkey Business: The Adventures of Curious George's Creators*, 2017 (82 minutes)
-

GRADES 6 TO 12

- *The Basketball Game*, 2011 (5 minutes)
 - *Pigeon*, 2004 (11 minutes)
 - *Hannah's Journey*, 2017 (100 minutes) [in French]
 - *Inside Hana's Suitcase* (2009) (88 minutes)
 - *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*, 2000 (122 minutes)
 - *The Book Thief*, 2013 (131 minutes)
 - *Jo Jo Rabbit*, 2019 (108 minutes) [contains satire, which should be discussed]
 - *The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler*, 2009 (95 minutes)
 - *The Island on Bird Street*, 1997 (107 minutes)
 - *One Survivor Remembers*, 1995 (40 minutes)
[contains historical footage of atrocities at the beginning that can be skipped for younger audiences]
-

GRADES 10-12+

- *Martha*, 2020 (21 minutes)
 - *The Pianist*, 2002 (150 minutes)
 - *Conspiracy*, 2001 (96 minutes)
 - *Night and Fog*, 1956 (32 minutes) [French with English subtitles]
 - *The Lady in Number 6: Music Saved My Life*, 2013 (39 minutes)
 - *The Zookeeper's Wife*, 2017 (127 minutes)
 - *Run Boy Run*, 2014 (112 minutes)
 - *Schindler's List*, 1994 (195 minutes)
[Must be pre-screened by teacher and edited for classroom use. Educators often use selected clips to focus on specific moments that align with their teaching objectives while avoiding some of the more graphic scenes.]
-