

Curriculum Lesson

Plans for

"She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots"

North Carolina's first Women's Holocaust Memorial, "She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots," an original sculpture by Victoria Milstein honors the strength and resilience of all women. It honors not only the thousands of women and children who were killed in an Einsatzgruppen action in Liepaja, Latvia on December 15, 1941, but also Eva Weiner and Sofia Guralnik, the brave women who saved their children, Shelly Weiner and Raya Kizhnerman, by hiding them in Nazi-occupied Poland for almost two years. Installed on April 18, 2023, in LeBauer Park in Greensboro, NC, the monument is the focus of these lesson plans, created to assist teachers in helping students understand the importance of memorializing the Holocaust and honoring those who suffered during this dark time in history. These classroom-tested lessons were created as a collaborative effort by veteran Holocaust educator and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Teacher Fellow Laurie Schaefer and renowned artist Victoria Milstein, the creator of the "She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" sculpture. These lessons can each be taught on their own or as a unit in English, Social Studies, or Arts classes and can be adapted to both middle and high school classes. Field trip plans are also included as one of the lessons if teachers are able to bring students to the memorial in downtown Greensboro.

LESSON I:

SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE: SHE WOULDN'T TAKE OFF HER BOOTS

This lesson is meant to help students understand the historical and cultural background of Liepaja, Latvia and the Einsatzgruppen killing action that took place there. Learning the history of this town and these people is one way to battle indifference. The photograph that inspired the memorial "She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" comes from the killing action in December of 1941 and will be analyzed in this lesson. Students will be able to synthesize their knowledge and their reactions to what they learn through a written culminating activity that they can share with their peers. This lesson has two versions for different student audiences. For students in middle school, it is recommended that teachers use the version of the lesson without the video of the killing action in Liepaja, as students of this age are not ready to process the graphic nature of the film. Teachers in high school should use discretion as well when choosing which version of the lesson to use, as some high school students may also not be ready to view it. Teachers who have been able to provide an extensive study of the Holocaust before these lessons, especially in an elective course, may be in the best situation to help their students process the video and survivor testimony. Making responsible methodological decisions in which version of the lesson to use for your students is the first step in this lesson.

Teacher Preparation:

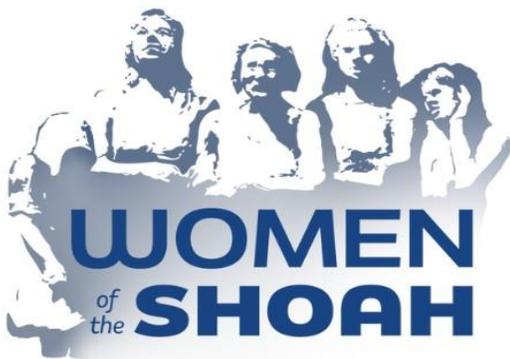
- [Animated Map of Einsatzgruppen from USHMM](#)
- [Einsatzgruppen Holocaust Encyclopedia Article from USHMM](#)
- [Einsatzgruppen Background from Yad Vashem](#)
- [Liepaja The Valley of Communities from Yad Vashem](#)

Student Handouts:

- [Presentation: "Spiritual Resistance: She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" \(with video\)](#)
- [Student Handout for "Spiritual Resistance: She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" \(with video\)](#)
- [Presentation: "Spiritual Resistance: She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" \(without video\)](#)
- [Student Handout for "Spiritual Resistance: She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" \(without video\)](#)

Objectives:

- Students will learn about the culture and life in Liepaja before the occupation of the Germans.
- Students will understand the process and impact of the Einsatzgruppen actions in Liepaja from June to December in 1941
- Students will analyze the photograph of the women who are the focus of the memorial and discuss the impact of their actions and how it is connected to spiritual resistance.
- Students will synthesize their knowledge of the history, culture, and spiritual resistance in Liepaja into a written product.



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LESSON I: SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE: "SHE WOULDN'T TAKE OFF HER BOOTS" LESSON PLAN CONTINUED

Length of Lesson:

- 2 class periods

USHMM Guidelines:

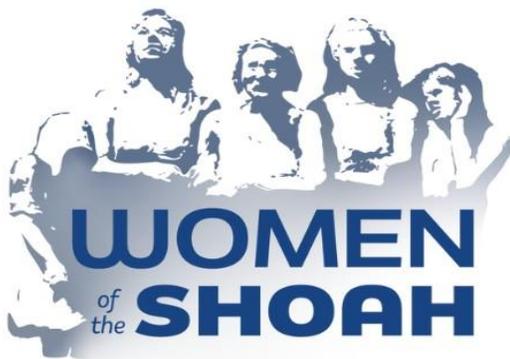
- #2: The Holocaust was not inevitable.
- #9: Translate statistics into people.
- #10: Make responsible methodological choices

Sources:

- [USHMM](#)
- [Yad Vashem](#)
- [Women of the Shoah](#)

Synopsis of Lesson:

- Begin by printing the Student Handout for Spiritual Resistance: "She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" and projecting the Google Slides Presentation for the lesson to work through the lesson together. There are two versions of the handout since one version of this lesson includes a video of the killing squad action in Liepaja in July of 1941. Teachers should use discretion in choosing whether or not to show this video to their students. It is not recommended that middle school students view the video, but some high school students may also not be ready to see the graphic images in this film.
- First, have students respond to the quote from Elie Wiesel about indifference and share their reaction to it by initially writing their response on the handout and then turning and talking with a partner about their thoughts before a whole class discussion. This quote is part of the memorial in Greensboro on the camera that visitors can look through to see the memorial.
- Show the photographs of Liepaja in the past and the present on the next few slides of the Google slides presentation and lead a whole class discussion about what they can learn about the town from the map and the two photographs of the town. Point out the details on the map and in the photographs that help them see why this town was such an important conquest for the Nazis, including the port that the town had a port that allowed movement of troops.
- Play the video of Max Solway as he talks about life in the town before the Nazi occupation and have students record two things that they learn and one quote from the testimony that resonated with them. Follow that by going over the timeline on the next slide of the occupations and events in Liepaja up to the first Einsatzgruppen action in the town in July of 1941.
- Next, share the testimony of Sigrid Quick and have students record two observations of what life was like when the Nazis came into the town on her wedding day. Also have them record one quote that resonates with them and discuss what they learned from her testimony.
- Follow that with the information about the women's prison and how it was used as a holding place for those who were about to be killed by the Einsatzgruppen. Have students make a word cloud in the space using the key words from the slide from both the information and the survivor testimony.



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LESSON I: SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE: "SHE WOULDN'T TAKE OFF HER BOOTS" LESSON PLAN CONTINUED

- For this next part, it is important that you use your best judgement as a teacher as to whether or not the video is something that your students should watch. This rare footage shows a mobile killing unit during a massacre in Liepaja, Latvia in July of 1941. It is the only film we have of any killings during the Holocaust and thus is graphic in nature. If you choose to use it, have students record their thoughts and reactions on the handout one word at a time to help them process what they are seeing.
- Consider having students choose one of their five words that they chose to describe what they saw and go around the classroom and just have each student share their one word to gauge emotions and reactions and follow up with any discussion that may help them process.
- Then, have the students listen to the interview with the videographer of the film and record five more words to communicate their reactions to what he says in the two excerpts from the interview. If needed, have students do the same thing as with the film and choose one word to share with the class to debrief what they heard and learned.
- Both versions of the lesson involve the testimony of Max Solway, who escaped by crawling out of the mass graves. Have students record the details of his escape or quotes from his testimony and discuss as a whole group.
- After sharing the next part of the timeline and the next two killing actions in the town, print off the photographs on slides 18-22 on full sheets of paper and then break the class up into five groups, giving each group one photograph. Have them record two details that they notice in the photo and one emotion that they see in the photo or feel about the photo after discussing the photo as a group. These photographs were taken by the Nazis during the December 1941 killings of the women and children in the town.
- Go through each photograph as a class and have each group share their observations about the details and the one emotion that they shared. Students should record the details from the other groups' analysis as well on their handout.
- On the next slides in the presentation, reveal the photograph used for the memorial one section at a time, having students draw what they see in each section and discussing the details that they are noticing as each section is revealed. Lead them through a discussion about the photograph as it is revealed and how spiritual resistance is present in the photograph. They can add notes about the photograph in the space underneath where they are drawing.
- On the next slides, share how the evidence of what the Nazis did in Liepaja was rescued and how others resisted by assisting Jews in the area by hiding them. The notes for the stories are in the note part underneath each slide.
- If students have not already learned about the "She Wouldn't Take Off Her Boots" exhibit in Greensboro, NC, then share the video and pictures of where the monument is and how the victims are currently memorialized in Liepaja and have students create one final word cloud to summarize what they learned about the monument's purpose and placement.
- As a culminating activity, have students create a found poem that encapsulates all that they have learned in this lesson using their notes, word clouds, and one-word reactions to create multiple stanzas to tell the story of the people of Liepaja. Have students share their poems with each other, present to the class, or do a gallery walk of the poems.