

Challenges and possibilities of Holocaust education and critical citizenship: An ethnographic study of a fifth-grade bilingual class revisited

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Abstract This classroom ethnography examines the engagement of fifth-grade children in a year-long study of rights, respect, and responsibility, which culminated in a focused study of tolerance and intolerance organized around literature regarding the Holocaust. A close examination of one teacher's approach to teaching about the Holocaust, the study highlights the importance of long-term engagements, a layered curriculum that supports children in building understandings over time, and varied opportunities for making meaning together. This approach included empathy-building, a focus on rescue and resistance and the bystander response, building a knowledge base about the Holocaust, stories of individual experiences, and opportunities to make personal connections. Drawing on samples of student talk, writing, and art, the article illustrates how children built upon academic and social practices established from the first days of school to expand their repertoire of meanings, language, and actions of (in)tolerance, gaining more complex understandings of the social, political, and moral implications of the Holocaust. Students in this bilingual class also developed individual and social actions in speaking out against social injustice in their own communities. The author argues that this classroom experience supported students as critical citizens who conscientiously and compassionately participate in the day-to-day building of more equitable communities.

Keywords Critical pedagogy · Classroom ethnography · Social justice

Structured inquiry into Holocaust history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behaviour... [and] addresses one of the central tenets of education in the

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USA, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen (US Holocaust Memorial Museum 2001, p. 1).

Teaching effectively about the Holocaust,¹ and the important lessons it offers regarding humanity and responsible citizenship, is challenging for teachers of any grade. Grappling with the complex issues of the Holocaust requires not only maturity, but adequate time and a supportive learning environment (Supple 1998a). High school teachers are often limited to a two-week unit in a crowded curriculum with multiple classes of students (Short 2000). Elementary grades offer the opportunity to build a strong community of learners throughout the school year that can support thoughtful and thorough learning engagements regarding topics as challenging as the Holocaust. Fifteen years ago, I collaborated with Irene Pattenaude as she engaged her bilingual fifth-grade class in a year-long study of social justice and responsible citizenship that included an in-depth focus on the Holocaust. Our collaboration revealed both challenges and possibilities for education regarding the Holocaust, (in)tolerance, and social responsibility in the upper elementary grades.

As described elsewhere (Jennings 1996; Jennings and Pattenaude 1998, 1999; Yeager et al. 1999), Irene worked with her grade-level colleagues, Beth Yeager and Phoebe Hirsche-Dubin, to develop a fifth-grade learning environment that immersed students in reflecting and acting upon what it means to be human and to be a community member. Across the school year, the study of the Holocaust was embedded within the larger classroom context constructed by Irene and her students in Room 18 that explicitly emphasized these “3Rs”: Rights, Respect, and Responsibility. They began the school year by brainstorming students’ ideas about community, rights, respect, and responsibility and then developing a classroom Bill of Rights and Responsibilities in English and Spanish. Throughout the year, students examined their responsibilities to themselves as individuals, to their classmates, and to members of the school, neighbourhood, and world communities. In January through May, this experience culminated in a study of the nature of tolerance and intolerance through a range of texts about the Holocaust, known as the “Tolerance Focus Study”.² The Tolerance Focus closed with a set of action steps taken by all fifth graders.

Our earlier publications describe and analyze the 3Rs curriculum and the Tolerance Focus. I revisit these data from two new perspectives. First, I consider the possibilities of Holocaust studies for fifth grade, particularly the benefit of time and a layered, interdisciplinary curriculum; not only did students draw upon the classroom community context of the 3R’s as a support for engaging in the Tolerance Focus, they also relied upon particular academic practices that they had been using from the first day of school. I examine how this classroom context and particular academic practices supported these young students in grappling with the difficult questions and content of the Holocaust, from genocide, racism, and discrimination to organized resistance and social responsibility. Second, I bring to these data a framework of critical citizenship, asking how the Tolerance Focus supported students in developing a capacity for sociopolitical critique and action.

¹ In this article, the term Holocaust refers to that of World War II, with respectful recognition that it is not the only holocaust in world history.

² Although the term “tolerance” can signify passive and even reluctant acceptance of others’ differences, the teachers used the term to indicate a proactive stance of acting responsibly to contribute to justice and equity.

Co-constructing opportunities for learning social justice

This ethnographic study is grounded in a sociocultural perspective (Collins and Green 1992) that knowledge (i.e., Berger and Luckmann 1966) and learning (i.e., Edwards and Mercer 1987; Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group 1992a, 1993) are socially constructed by teachers and students through their interaction. Thus, members of a class co-construct learning opportunities for themselves and each other through their actions and practices over extended periods of time (Tuyay et al. 1995). Learning is conceptualized here as expanding repertoires of meanings, language, and action (Jennings and Pattenaude 1998). This perspective is particularly important when considering learning regarding (in)tolerance and social responsibility. For example, a child might understand the meaning of resistance but struggle with finding words to express it. Other students might talk about the need to stand up against oppressors, but be unsure of how to respond when witnessing an act of bullying.

Given the layered nature of Irene's curriculum, it is helpful to examine how students made meaning of the Holocaust by making connections among written, visual and spoken texts—a process of intertextuality (Kristeva 1986; Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group 1992b; Short 1992). From a social semiotic perspective, Lemke (1992) underscores the transformative power of intertextuality by suggesting that, when juxtaposed and connected, one text can multiply the *meaning potential* of the other. By emphasizing potential, he suggests that meaning does not reside in the text, but that actors construct it as they interact with texts. He emphasizes that not only the relationships among texts, but the different sign system modalities expressed with and through them, multiply each other's meaning potential. This study illustrates how intertextuality can also multiply *language* and *action potential*. When learning about topics as complex as the Holocaust, it is particularly important to provide children with opportunities to make connections among texts and to their own experiences.

Holocaust education and critical citizenship

Beth Yeager originally developed the 3R's curriculum, then refined it with Irene and Phoebe (Yeager et al. 1999). Since then, educators have proposed curricular frameworks for Holocaust education programmes. Reviewing research on Holocaust education, Burtonwood (2002) summarizes important features: (1) including stories of individual experience; (2) building empathy; (3) building a knowledge base about the Holocaust and Judaism; (4) making connection to other genocides and racism; and (5) studying the bystander response countered with stories of resistance and rescue. Short (2000) adds that stories of rescue help learners to reconceptualize heroism as a willingness to resist conformity. Gallant and Hartman (2001) recommend approaches that address cognitive, attitudinal, and action outcomes. Totten (2002) describes an in-depth curriculum that provokes critical thought and personal growth, in part by posing “gnawing” questions. From an affective perspective, empathy-building is critical (Short 2000), and is supported by literature that offers first-person experiences of the Holocaust. The majority of these curricular and pedagogical elements were woven into the Tolerance Focus Study, with an emphasis on empathy, respect for human life and human rights, the effects of racism and oppression, and social responsibility.

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum (2001) posits that, for children 11 and older, the Holocaust is one of the most effective subjects for understanding the dynamic nature of democratic institutions. It is important to clarify what features of citizenship and

democratic participation are emphasized. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) point out varying conceptualizations of democratic participation visible across schools and classrooms. The *personally responsible* citizen is honest and law-abiding; *participatory citizens* take active and leading roles within established systems and community structures; a *justice-oriented citizen* questions and changes established systems and structures when they reproduce injustice. This description of a justice-oriented citizen corresponds with *critical citizenship* (Jennings and Green 1999; Jennings et al. 2006). Critical citizens participate conscientiously, compassionately, and actively in the day-to-day building of more equitable communities, be they classroom, neighbourhood, national, or global communities. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue that many programmes do not address a balanced view of citizenship, but “privilege individual acts of compassion and kindness over social action and the pursuit of social justice” (p. 243). They add that “personal responsibility, voluntarism and character education must be considered in a broader social context or they risk advancing civility or docility instead of democracy” (p. 244).

This final point connects sharply with central tenets of Holocaust education. Ruth Shoemaker (2003) summarizes the stance of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum: through studying the Holocaust, students learn that “even unintentional indifference and silence to the sufferings and human rights infringements of others perpetuate their victimization, and that the Holocaust was not inevitable but rather occurred because people made choices that legitimized prejudice, hatred and mass murder” (p. 191). Critical citizens are not passive bystanders, but critically conscious *upstanders* (Power 2002) who recognize our culpability in allowing injustice to stand and the vital importance of taking action to alter the status quo.

In this article, I examine the challenges and possibilities of bridging Holocaust education with education for critical citizenship in Irene’s fifth-grade bilingual class. Two overarching questions guide this analysis. What meanings, language, and actions regarding (in)tolerance did students in Room 18 construct over time? And what academic and social practices in Room 18 supported learning regarding the Holocaust and critical citizenship?

Research design

This article grew out of a larger research effort. Irene and I became a research team as members of a school-university research collaborative, the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group. In 1994–1995, I was a participant-observer in Irene’s bilingual class, examining with her the role of social, academic, and literate practices in helping students to make meaning of tolerance and social justice (Jennings 1996). Here, I examine the data with fresh eyes and a larger set of questions about the development of the Tolerance Focus.

Setting and participants

Room 18 was situated in a bilingual school in Santa Barbara that served a large Latino population, largely of Mexican origin. Of the 520 students in the school, 80% were eligible for free lunch. In Room 18, nineteen students were Latino/a, six were European-American, and one was Native American. As a bilingual class, members of Room 18 spoke Spanish, English, or both throughout the school day. Twenty-two students read the core literature in English as their primary language or as “transition” students, where English was their second language. The remaining four students were “Spanish readers”, who were learning English, but concentrating on developing literate fluency in their primary language.

Four students received special education resource services, meeting a resource specialist outside of the classroom.

Methods

As a participant-observer, I videotaped and took field notes all day for the first 3 weeks of each school year and during selected events, yielding over 200 hours of data. Data also include videotaped interviews with the teacher and students and student artifacts (e.g., essays, art).

I examined learning in the moment and over time through an interactional ethnographic approach (Castanheira et al. 2001). Using field notes, I constructed an event map (Green and Wallat 1979; Green and Meyer 1991) of the Tolerance Focus to represent the flow of activity through time. Each event was marked with types of literate actions, source texts and class-constructed texts, any connections among these texts, and the interactional spaces (Heras 1993) of each activity. Spradley's (1980) cultural domain, taxonomic, and thematic analyses were used to uncover patterns of meanings that members were co-constructing through these events and in student-produced texts. From these analyses, I selected key events (Gumperz 1986) for transcription and analysis of discourse to investigate how learners were constructing particular meanings of the Holocaust and critical citizenship. After analyzing each set of student texts, I selected examples as "telling cases" (Mitchell 1984). In this study, telling cases both represent features found across students' texts and provide a clear illustration of the theoretical construct(s) being examined.

Findings

It is important to emphasize that the Tolerance Focus Study grew out of a broader curriculum that emphasized Rights, Respect, and Responsibility from the first day of school. Also, the activities in the Tolerance Focus drew upon a range of related topics and academic practices that students engaged in throughout the preceding months of school. For example, when studying the Iroquois Federation in the fall, they discussed the genocide of American Indians and forced removal from their homelands. Regarding academic practices, throughout the first half of the school year, children constructed Venn diagrams that compared features of two texts, wrote diary entries from the perspective of a character in a novel, and responded to poetry by writing selected lines from a poem in one column and responding to those lines in the other column (see Jennings 1996; Jennings and Pattenaude 1998; Yeager et al. 1999). Thus, students were already familiar with these academic practices when they engaged them during the Tolerance Focus, as evident in the analyses below.

The Tolerance Focus Study was organized around a range of texts (Table 1) and strategies for examining texts that helped students make meaning of the Holocaust and take actions that promote tolerance and justice. Containing 52 days from January 5 through May 19, it was organized in four overlapping phases. Phase 1 introduced and framed the cycle as a study of tolerance and intolerance. Phase 2 focused on making meaning of (in)tolerance by interacting with a large variety of texts about the Holocaust. Phases 3 and 4 involved constructing personal and grade-wide action steps for promoting tolerance and justice.

The findings are organized in three sections. The first section describes engagements with texts that introduced the Holocaust to students and examines their initial responses. The next section examines how students constructed an expanded repertoire of meanings

Table 1 Source texts used in the Tolerance Focused Study

Print	Novels	Number the Stars/ <i>¿Quién cuenta las estrellas?</i> (Lowry 1989a, b) <i>Jacob's Rescue</i> (Drucker and Halperin 1993)
	Picture books	<i>The Terrible Things</i> (Bunting 1980) <i>The Children We Remember</i> (Abells 1986) <i>Rosa Blanca/Rose Blanche</i> (Innocenti 1985, 1987) <i>Let the Celebrations Begin!</i> (Wild 1991)
	Short stories	“Letter from a Concentration Camp” (Uchida 1990)
	Poems	“ <i>I am a Star</i> ”/“ <i>Yo soy un estrella</i> ” “ <i>I Wish I Were a Little Bird</i> ” “ <i>Why?</i> ”/“ <i>¿Por qué?</i> ”
	Excerpted texts	<i>Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl</i> (Frank 1995) Pastor Niemoller’s quote
	Letters	A fellow teacher’s letters from his Jewish grandfather (written in Spanish)
	Newspaper articles	Editorial on response to hate crimes in Billings, MT; Article on anti-Semitism in Santa Barbara
Oral	Lecture/discussion	Irene’s lecture on historical background of the Holocaust
Graphic	Maps	Europe Axis invasions/occupations Death statistics
Audio-visual	Fiction	“Miracle at Moreaux”
	Non-fiction	20/20 Journalistic piece on childhood survivors “Treblinka” “Lodz Ghetto” “Purple Triangle”
Multi-media	Museum displays	Simon Wiesenthal Center: Museum of Tolerance (Los Angeles)
	Radio/TV	Oklahoma Federal Building bombing (current event)

regarding the Holocaust, society, and critical citizenship throughout the second phase of the Tolerance Focus. The final section examines how meanings and language were integrated with action in the last two phases.

Initial responses to the Holocaust

The question becomes not whether we should teach the Holocaust to young people but how we should teach it. (Supple 1998b, p. 19)

Irene thoughtfully considered how to introduce her young students to the Holocaust, scaffolding children’s texts that unfolded the horrors with an informative lecture that provided historical context. She created ample opportunities to reflect on and respond to this difficult information through writing, drawing, and talking. Phase 1 introduced students to the study of (in)tolerance and social justice through the reading of two picture books, a lecture that provided an historical context of World War II, and work with maps.

The Tolerance Focus opened with two picture books. *The Terrible Things*, by Bunting (1980), was read on the first day. This allegory of the Holocaust is told through the fate of animals in a forest, which are taken by the “Terrible Things”, group by group, while the other animals look away, until a single rabbit remains. Students drew their images of the “Terrible Things” as pencil sketches, the medium used to illustrate the story. *The Children*

We Remember (Abells 1986) is a photo essay written for elementary students that documents the lives of Jewish children who both did and did not survive the Holocaust.

Irene first read aloud *The Children We Remember* before providing historical information on the Holocaust because she wanted them to see the children in the photographs as children like them, not as more distant “children of war”. The students looked and listened with rapt attention as Irene read aloud. Closing the book, she told the students that this event really happened, that it is something students needed to think about, and that “as human beings we need to know about things like this so that we can make decisions so that these kind of things don’t happen”. Thus, from the first days of the Tolerance Focus Study, Irene emphasized individual and social responsibility to make informed decisions. Students drew their immediate responses with black marker on white paper. Their responses were deeply emotional and visceral. Several drawings represented Holocaust events, such as Cynthia’s depiction of a person being shot by a Nazi soldier. Most of the drawings represent themes of sorrow or retaliation.

Sorrow

Many drawings illustrated sorrow, as expressed by José, a bilingual resource student (Fig. 1). José made intertextual links to the Star of David and fire, both of which were presented in the book through photographs and the sentences, “they made Jews sew patches on their clothes” and “they burned synagogues”. José composed these symbols in a way that multiplies their individual meaning, by placing the Star of David on a crying man, who stands before a large fire. This image, which never appears in the book, evokes much meaning and emotion with a few simple strokes of black marker. Researchers (Clyde 1994; Smagorinsky and Coppock 1994; Whitin 1994) have emphasized the role of visual arts in providing opportunities for students to express and construct meanings that would be difficult to accomplish through writing.

Although it was important for José and his peers to be able to express their immediate reactions to this introductory text, Irene wanted them to revisit it from a broader, more informed perspective. Thus, a few days later, she provided historical information through

Fig. 1 José’s response to *The Children We Remember* (Abells 1986)



a 45-min lecture and discussion regarding the buildup of the Nazi regime, anti-Semitic laws established by Hitler, the Allied and Axis powers, and general events of World War II. Students then revisited *The Children We Remember* from this historically situated perspective and responded through quick-write responses. These written responses helped them to expand upon original meanings, examine them from a different perspective, and articulate meanings through a different sign system. Thus, whereas José could express his immediate emotional response in his drawing, his written response provided an opportunity to re-examine, explain, and expand upon his first response:

I feel that it wasn't fair because they [Jewish people] didn't do anything and [they were persecuted] only because they were of another religion. Because of this their schools were burned and they closed their stores and took them away to other places and all because they were from another religion. I really feel something for them because I feel for them...it's pure sadness. [translated from Spanish]

José's illustration effectively expressed "pure" feelings of sadness; after gaining historical information and encountering the book anew, he connected this sadness to anti-Semitism, discrimination, and human rights abuses in this written response. He explained his understanding of anti-Semitism by referring to the systematic oppression of the Jewish people, even though "they didn't do anything" and "all because they were from another religion". José named specific human rights violations, such as burning schools and forced removal, and underscored his empathy and deep sorrow.

Retaliation

Several other students responded with outrage and a desire to retaliate. After the first reading of *The Children We Remember*, Matthew, an American Indian boy, struggled for over 20 min with how to represent his feelings. He was talking with his table mates about what to draw when Irene came to their table:

Matthew (to Irene):	I don't know what to draw
Virginia:	Nobody knows what to draw
Alán:	Make the Nazis suffer
Irene:	How are you feeling, Matthew?
Ian:	I'll draw myself saying something about it
Irene:	Well you'll have a chance to say something about it after, but now you can draw it out, get what's in your gut
Alán:	I feel bad for the children and I want the Nazis to die
Matthew:	Yeah
Irene:	How would you show those feelings?
Erik:	They don't deserve to die
Alán:	No one deserves to die

These students were sharing the struggle of locating their feelings and representing them visually. At other tables, students were discussing and drawing weeping figures, but at Matthew's table a retaliation theme began to emerge. Rather than try to steer them in another direction, Irene's remarks emphasized exploring their feelings and how to represent them visually.

Matthew and his table mates continued to discuss their ideas and collaborated to accurately draw symbols such as the Star of David. Matthew's drawing (Fig. 2)

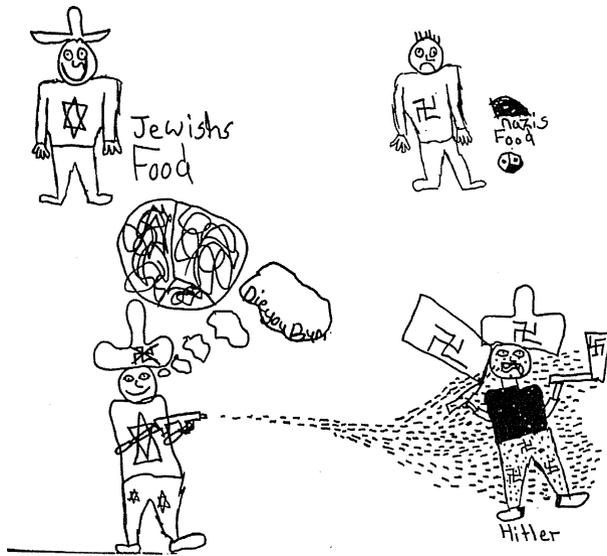


Fig. 2 Matthew's drawing response to *The Children We Remember*

incorporates these symbols to represent retaliation for the starvation and murder of Jewish people. At the top, a Jewish person smiles over a big plate of food next to a frowning Nazi who has just a few morsels; below a Jewish gunman thinking, "Die you Bum" riddles Hitler with gunfire. Like other educators (e.g., Gregory 2000), Irene recognized how important it was for Matthew and his peers to express their sincere reactions and feelings about the Holocaust, even violent ones, and therefore she did not censor the students' expressions unless they were clearly inappropriate in a classroom setting. She also knew that they would have many more opportunities during the Tolerance Focus to expand their repertoire of responses to violence and injustice.

Matthew's written response, developed after the lecture and the second reading of the book, suggests a more complex understanding³:

I feel sad that the kids got shot and that some people were forced out of there houses.
I think that that is mean that they burned schools and that they burned cinagods [synagogues]. I think that people should kill the nazis.

Matthew's writing bridges cognitive and affective responses, expressing several reasons for his retaliatory feelings. First, he directly stated that he felt sad, a sentiment not visible in his drawing. He articulated explicit human rights violations and atrocities that led to his view that "people should kill the Nazis", which is the focus of his drawing. With additional knowledge offered by the lecture, Matthew had the opportunity to present in writing a more complex "picture" of his initial feelings and views represented by his drawing.

Totten (1998) stressed the importance of developing an effective opening to the study of the Holocaust in secondary school. While secondary teachers need to start by assessing students' current knowledge base about the Holocaust, Irene needed to consider how to

³ I offer Matthew's words as he wrote them; spelling, grammar, and punctuation were addressed in other parts of the curriculum.

best introduce the topic to her fifth-grade students. Through her choice of texts, her decisions on how to position them, and her explicit discourse, Irene facilitated the shaping of a particular context for examining the Holocaust, one that focused on humanity, human rights, and responsible social action.

A range of intertextual strategies supported students in expressing their feelings and understandings in learning about the Holocaust and the social and moral questions it raises about humanity. The children had many opportunities to share their responses and thinking; they could help each other grapple with and articulate their emotions and ideas about the perplexing and troubling events of the Holocaust. Additionally, drawing and writing responses together provided students with opportunities to extend their thinking (Clyde 1994; Smagorinsky and Coppock 1994) and to look at and respond to the texts from different angles. In the next section, I examine strategies that helped José, Matthew, and their classmates to move beyond these initial responses to intolerance and genocide to more expanded meanings and language related to critical citizenship.

Expanding repertoires

Children must be invited to reflect on complex issues, cast them in light of their own experiences and questions, and figure out for themselves—and with one another—what kind of person one ought to be, which traditions are worth keeping, and how to proceed when two basic values seem to be in conflict. (Kohn 1997, p. 435)

During Phase 2, the class studied the Holocaust through a large selection of texts. This phase was organized around the core literature the class was reading in four heterogeneous reading groups, *Number the Stars*, by Lois Lowry (1989a); Spanish readers read the translation, *Quien Cuenta las Estrellas* (Lowry 1989b). This children's novel is told from the perspective of Annemarie, a Christian girl in Norway whose family helps her Jewish friend Ellen escape to Sweden. Students interacted with many other texts during this phase, including excerpts from the diary of Anne Frank, a read-aloud novel told from a Jewish boy's perspective (Drucker and Halperin 1993); three poems, two additional picture books, a short story, letters from another teacher's Polish grandfather, newspaper articles, five fictional and nonfictional videos, and displays at the Museum of Tolerance in the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

Analysis of student writings indicated that they co-constructed three prominent themes as they interacted with texts. (1) *Intergroup conflict and cooperation* focused on the abuse of power and social organization against powerful oppressors. (2) *Rescue and resistance* refers to the need for individuals to act by resisting oppressive forces and rescuing those being oppressed rather than simply looking out for oneself. (3) Action is also emphasized in the theme of *agency* of Jewish and other people. For example, in interpreting various texts, class members often focused on the sacrifices that many Jewish people made to save their children and siblings. All these themes centered on actions and interactions: actions of intergroup conflict and cooperation, intolerant actions, and responsible actions. In other words, these themes centered around the Holocaust as a vehicle for making meaning of the consequence of intolerant actions as well as responsible actions for creating and maintaining a just and equitable society.

Also, class activities were framed in ways that fostered particular orientations. First, class members often oriented to the *point of view* of characters and people in the source texts. For example, in reading *The Children We Remember*, students were oriented to the Holocaust from the point of view of children who suffered in it; the text states that these

were children “just like you,” and Irene emphasized this point herself several times while she read aloud. Also, students often made personal connections to events in the text, a phenomenon that Cochran-Smith (1984) refers to as “text-to-life” and “life-to-text” connections. A third prominent orientation focused on *responsible actions*. On Day 1, for example, after reading *The Terrible Things*, the class discussed what actions the animals could have taken to counteract the Terrible Things. I examine how these themes and orientations interacted as students responded to texts in Phase 2, drawing upon samples from different genres of student writing: Venn diagrams, students’ letters to Anne Frank, diary entries, and double-entry notes.

Venn diagrams

Now that students had a larger historical context, Irene wanted them to revisit the *The Terrible Things* and its allegorical message. Over one circle of a Venn diagram, she placed a quote from the text:

The rabbits scampered in every direction. “Help!” they screamed. “Somebody help!” But there was no one left to help. And the big circling nets dropped over them and the Terrible Things carried them away.

She placed a modification of Pastor Martin Niemoller’s famous quote over the second intersecting circle:

In Germany they first came for the Communists and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me—and by that time no one was left to speak up.

The graphic strategy of the Venn diagram helped students make connections between the allegorical story and the pastor’s real experience of the Holocaust. The intersecting circles in the diagram provide a structure for differentiating what is unique in each text from the commonalities. In their heterogeneous reading groups, students read and discussed both quotes before filling in the diagram with similarities and differences. Irene met with each reading group to read and discuss each quote, their commonalities and differences, and how the quotes related to students’ own lives. Irene asked one group, “what do you think this is saying about responsibility, about individual responsibility, your responsibility?” Sergio responded, suggesting that it was a responsibility to “stick up for other people” and the discussion continued:

- Irene: How do you feel inside or how do you justify not saying anything when you know something is wrong?
 Pati: Mad
 Irene: Do you feel mad at yourself when you don’t say anything?
 Pati: (shakes head “no”)
 Irene: No, who do you feel mad at?
 Sergio: You feel mad after they have taken them
 Irene: Mad at who?
 Sergio: Yourself
 Matthew: Because you didn’t say nothing

Irene: And you feel like you could have made a difference?

Matthew: Yeah

Sergio: Then you start wondering what would've happened if we had stuck up for 'em

Irene raised similar questions with each group regarding the dangers of remaining a bystander and the possibility of making a difference in the face of injustice. These discussions went beyond intellectual comparisons; Irene's questions throughout the discussion helped students to make personal connections to the text by focusing them on their feelings of choosing to remain a bystander. Irene helped students make additional text-to-life connections by asking them to consider situations they have encountered in their own lives, such as witnessing a playground fight and being a bystander to bullying. Thus, the class explored tensions involving the risks of action and consequences of inaction in two contexts: one more severe, complex, and distant, and another more immediate to their own everyday lives. Teachers need to tread carefully, however, when comparing playground fights to brutal genocide (Lipstadt 1995).

The students then worked in pairs to fill in the diagram. The diagrams of Sergio and Matthew, like those of many of their peers, recorded differences between the texts but still recognized a fundamental similarity of inaction: both the animals and humans, as "living things," did not "stick up for each other" and thus were taken away. While a few students wrote about this inaction in their quick-write responses to *The Terrible Things* on Day 2, most students identified this shared message of social responsibility and uniting against larger, oppressive forces in the Venn diagram on Day 6.

Letters

On Day 14, the class read an article about diaries as well as excerpts from the diary of Anne Frank. They underlined lines that caught their interest, wrote comments and questions in the margins, and then wrote letters to Anne Frank. These letters showed much empathy, as they took Anne's perspective and connected it with their own lives, as represented by Angela, a Mexican–American bilingual girl:

Dear Anne Frank,

I feel sorry for you because you have to share food, be scrunched in a little room. You have to worry about dying and storveing [starving]. I also am sorry because you had to bend your nees and they froze and you hardly ever got to walk. I thought you were smart for writing in a diary because if I was bored I would write in a diary too.

Sincerely,
Angela

Angela expressed her understanding of suffering faced by people forced into hiding that includes not only physical discomfort and tedium, but fear of death and starvation. Commenting on Anne's decision to keep a diary to combat boredom, Angela also recognized a degree of agency in Anne's otherwise very constrained life. The letter activity helped students make empathic connections by speaking directly to Anne; it also helped them to gain a fuller picture of individuals' lives and experiences that simultaneously recognize conditions of violent oppression while also growing beyond simple, caricatured, or stereotypical views of the victims of the Holocaust (Burtonwood 2002; Gallant and Hartman 2001).

Diary entries

In interpreting the core literature, *Number the Stars*, students wrote a diary entry for each chapter from one character's perspective. Trinetta, a European–American girl, chose the perspective of Ellen, the Jewish friend whom Annemarie's family helped to escape to Sweden. In one entry, Trinetta managed to take Ellen's point of view even though Ellen was not "present" in the chapter, which centered on Annemarie delivering a package to the Danish resistance movement. The chapter only indicated that Ellen was hiding on a fishing boat, and Trinetta imagined her experience:

Dear Tazzy, 3/28/95

I'm in the boat. I just heard something, so I snuggled up to my mom, because I thought that it could be a soldier. Then I heard Annemarie's voice. I wanted to jump up and hug her. I looked at mama but I knew mama knew what I was thinking. She shook her head and whispered to me, "stay down". So I obeyed. I think that Annemarie was brave to come here.

Sincerely,
Ellen

Trinetta recognized the danger faced by people seeking to escape the Nazi regime as well as the risk Annemarie took by participating in the Resistance. These diary entries personally engaged Trinetta and her peers in the risks, triumphs, and challenges of resistance and rescue, helping them to grapple further with the moral dilemmas of social responsibility.

Double-entry notes

Students used a double-entry format to record their notes and interpretations of videos, lectures, and poetry. For example, on Day 39, the class read aloud several poems written by children in concentration camps. They then wrote selected lines from the poems on the left with their interpretations of these lines on the right. The selected poems were heart-rending cries of despair and abandonment. The students' responses related to these children's dire and senseless imprisonment while also orienting to the possibility of rescue. From one poem, Ben, a European–American boy whose father is Jewish, wrote the verse on the left and his interpretation on the right:

I wish I were a little bird, up in the bright blue
sky, that sings and flies just where he will
and no one will ask Why

I think if I wasn't Jewish I would try to save this
poor little girl so she can do what she wants
and not be trapped and die. I would want her
to be free!

Ben called attention to the inhumanity of imprisoning innocent children and expressed his desire for the girl to be free. He inserted himself in his response, noting that he wanted to rescue the girl, recognizing her anguish and threat of death. Like Ben's, many students' responses to the poems pondered the senselessness of the Holocaust and basic human rights violations, calling for some type of action to change the situation.

Cynthia, a Mexican–American girl, recognized the possibility of rescue in a different way, responding to two lines from another poem:

Maybe from there the world will hear my cry
[...] why?

Some people will hear but can't do any thing.
and some don't do any thing

Cynthia succinctly captured dilemmas faced by bystanders who are either powerless to insert themselves or choose not to. These students' double-note entries for poetry responded to the atrocities of the concentration camp by empathizing with and taking up the poets' point of view.

The letters, diary entries, and double-entry responses to children's poems provide entry points for experiencing the events themselves and grappling with their complexity. Spalding et al. (2007) suggest that the direct experiences of teacher education candidates with witnesses, survivors, resisters, and rescuers were "key to provoking individuals to take action in the cause of social justice" (p. 1452). Although the children in Room 18 encountered the survivors, victims, resisters, and rescuers through fiction and nonfiction texts, these academic practices of perspective-taking and empathy-building represent a step in that direction. It is important to note that these were all practices familiar to the students from activities they had engaged in from the first days of fifth grade. Thus, they did not have to concentrate on learning the academic practice of writing diary entries, but instead could focus on engaging in it to relate and respond to their study of intolerance and the Holocaust. Furthermore, they continued to expand their understanding of the 3R's by considering how rights and responsibilities were much more complex and life-threatening factors during the Holocaust.

Through these academic engagements, these young learners were, in the words of Alfie Kohn (1997, p. 435) "invited to reflect on complex issues, cast them in light of their own experiences and questions", and, individually and with each other, sort out important issues regarding humanity, power, and responsible citizenship. Each class of students and teachers will engage differently with these texts and activities. Over time, this particular class community constructed a referential system for interpreting the texts in particular ways—ways that acknowledged the incomprehensible horrors of the Holocaust while also bringing to light agency, responsible action, and intergroup cooperation. Similarly, intolerance and injustice were framed as abrogation of responsibility and abuse of power. These themes were interpreted from particular orientations or stances of trying on other's points of view, making connections to one's own life, and examining responsible action.

Personal and social actions

Who's responsible? (Question on sign posted throughout the Museum of Tolerance in the Simon Wiesenthal Center).

Teachers should try to create projects that would not only help learn about genocide using the Holocaust as a model but would also develop the kind of activism in students that builds bridges between the 'we' and 'they' in the community. (Gallant and Hartman 2001, p. 9)

These analyses illustrate how various academic engagements provided opportunities for students to construct meanings and language for tolerance and responsible social action through a range of texts and modes of expression in the first half of the Tolerance Focus. While actions were emphasized through the themes and orientations in Phases 1 and 2, they were largely related to those of the characters and people in the texts. In Phase 3, the

focus shifted towards actions that the students could take themselves. In this section, I examine processes that helped students further multiply meaning, language, and action potential regarding tolerance and justice.

Personal action steps

Phase 3 opened with a field trip to the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. The museum contained several sections, one focusing on the Holocaust of World War II and another containing interactive displays regarding tolerance and prejudice in general. The Holocaust section included poignant and graphic videos that illustrate human suffering and courage. In the tolerance section, signs that ask “who is responsible?” are found throughout the interactive displays.⁴ The students responded powerfully to the museum and were given the opportunity to express their feelings and impressions with two personal action steps: constructing a Wall of Remembrance and writing what came to be called “tolerance essays”.

After discussing the Wall of Remembrance at the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, made from children’s ceramic tiles, all the fifth-graders in the school constructed their own laminated paper tiles, which were hung at the school’s entrance to create a fifth grade Wall of Remembrance. Various processes allowed students to extend the meanings and language of earlier texts. First, as they created their own tiles, they could again share their knowledge and consider ideas represented in their tablemates’ tiles. Second, many tiles elaborated on features from earlier text constructions. For example, the drawing responses to *The Children We Remember* contained many Stars of David, crossed-out swastikas, and some peace signs, which were readily in evidence on the tiles. These tiles extended these meanings with a larger global message of peace and caring through additional images. For example, many tiles shared an image of a globe encircled by people holding hands or the word “love” or “Amistad” (friendship).

The construction of the tiles helped students to envision a more tolerant and just world; they then wrote essays that helped them to think about actions they could take toward their vision. The essays thus provided an opportunity to reflect on the museum displays in relationship to all the other texts, stories, and experiences they had encountered throughout the Tolerance Focus. All students read their essays aloud to the class, an action that both enabled them to take a public stand and provided them with access to each other’s understandings. Most of the essays grappled with the painful realities of the Holocaust; all of them brought in one of the themes of intergroup conflict and cooperation, agency of individuals, and rescue and resistance. Moreover, they all showed an orientation to taking others’ point of view, making personal connections, and taking responsible actions. Excerpts from three of the essays serve as telling examples.

Rebecca, an Anglo-American girl, reflects in her essay all six themes and orientations as well as a mature understanding of the nature of and consequences of intolerance and racism:

At the Museum of Tolerance I learned that people went through massive suffering, massive pain, and massive heartache. The Jewish people were slaughtered and tortured. The Jews were put in concentration camps and gas chambers. They were shot at and they had everything they ever had taken away from them. This was because one group

⁴ The museum staff was reluctant to permit fifth-graders, but after the first visit, made the previous year, they wrote to Irene and Beth indicating that they were impressed with the maturity displayed by the fifth graders and their preparation for the museum.

didn't like their religion and that one group wanted power. Racism goes on every day, everywhere. I learned that I should be more tolerant and respectful to anyone and everyone, no matter what their religion and no matter what they look like.

The visit has and will continue to affect me for the better. Before the trip I knew racism went on. And I knew it was wrong but now I've seen what racism can do. Racism hurts. People are still getting hurt and people are still getting killed because of racism. The visit has helped me see that I need to be tolerant of everyone. I need to help and share with any human being that is in need. I know that I can't stop everyone from being racist, but I can show people how much being racist hurts others.

In the first paragraph, Rebecca described the suffering brought on by the Holocaust and discussed the nature of the Holocaust in terms of abuse of power, intolerance, anti-Semitism, and racism. She did not turn away from the stark brutality inflicted on Jewish people. (Multiple texts, including the museum displays, also referred to other groups of people victimized during the Holocaust, but students tended to focus on the Jewish people). She took the perspective of the people targeted and also articulated responsible actions that she can take against racism, particularly by showing people "how much being racist hurts others".

Sergio, a Mexican–American bilingual boy, also focused on actions and connected power with racism:

I learned that there are still people who believe what Hitler believed. Now I know that history can repeat itself and that we can still be fooled.... But if we join together we can stop them from changing our world.... There are still a lot of people who are racist and they have strong and powerful voices. I learned what it feels like to be a Jewish person. I don't think it was fun. I will protest against racist people and try my best. I think we all have different responsibilities [...] I have a responsibility to take care of people smaller and older than me. Just like that you can change the world.

Sergio recognized the destructive potential of racism and genocidal policies, putting himself in the shoes of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. He pointed to the ongoing power of racism, remaining hopeful that individual and collective action could counteract it.

Mayra, a Mexican–American Spanish reader, reflected profoundly on humanity and inhumanity, and the loss we all suffer through discrimination and genocide:

This trip changed my view and allowed me to understand the things that happen in this world. The world is different because at times there is peace and times there are wars where a lot of people die. Sometimes I stop and think that I and everyone else can change the world, by making sure there is peace and love. If no one among us were Jewish, this world would be a lonely place, because we are all part of this world. When I saw the pictures of the numbers of Jewish people that had been killed, I felt guilty for not knowing sooner so that I could have given them love and caring. Respect is what we need to give one another and we should also ask for forgiveness from one another for the evil that we have done. [translated from Spanish]

Mayra's essay demonstrates the hope expressed by Dan Napolitano, of the US Holocaust Museum: "we certainly think and hope and expect that exposure to this kind of discipline, this kind of information, will foster intelligent reflection on what it means to be a human being, what it means to live in society" (cited by Shoemaker 2003, p. 194).

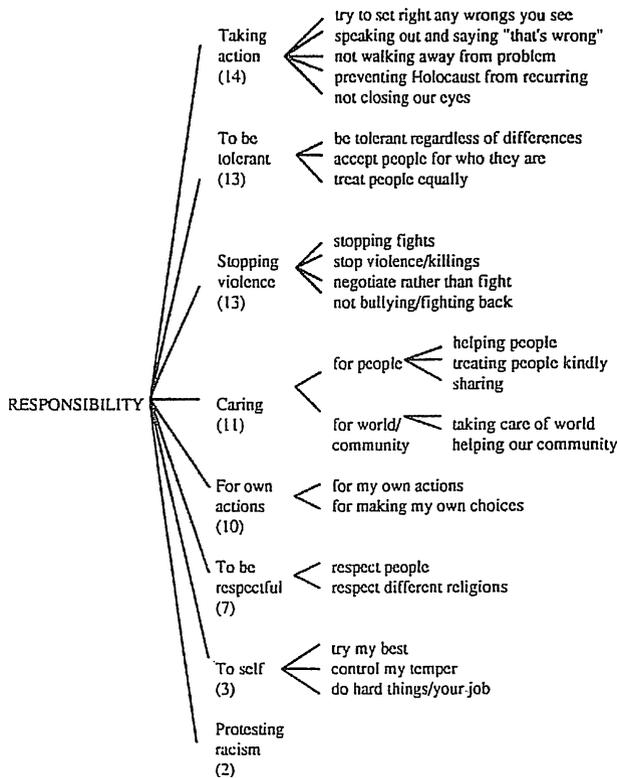


Fig. 3 Taxonomy of responsibility attributes that were articulated in students' tolerance essays

These three essays represent an ability to empathize, a more complex understanding of the nature of intolerance, and the recognition of our individual and collective responsibility for creating and maintaining a just and tolerant society. While each essay is unique, they all refer to the rights to life, dignity, and equality; the need for mutual respect among all groups of people; and the need for people to uphold these rights and respect through responsible actions. The other essays in the class, all quite original, reflect similar understandings (Fig. 3) indicating how students grew in their understandings and language for articulating responsibility.

Community action step

By early May, the three-fifth-grade classes were ready to take an action to support tolerance and justice in their community. Each class brainstormed ideas and then voted on them. They agreed to make a video that captured what they learned about tolerance in an interview "talk show" format to send to the City Council. The process involved all students in writing questions regarding what they had learned. They practiced conducting a broadcast interview in small groups; then groups of volunteers from each class carried out the actual taped interview.

In the action video, students made connections to prior texts and to their own lives, most of their comments centering on actions. For example, when Irene asked students why they think Lois Lowry wrote *Number the Stars*, Susana, a Mexican–American girl, replied, "So people

could speak up and tell the people what could happen in this world now and um to see maybe what happened before and how people got threatened.” Like Susana, other students connected knowledge and action, speaking about the importance of learning about the Holocaust and intolerance so that they could take actions to promote tolerance and justice.

Students also made links to future life texts by projecting future actions. Asked how they would take what they learned into middle school, Miguel said, “be respectful of one another and you don’t have to be everyone’s friend but just be nice to them and try to make friends but pick your friends carefully.” José noted that he would take his future children and wife to the Museum of Tolerance, tell them to think about how the Jewish people felt, teach them how to respect people, not to fight, and “if there’s like a new kid in school, not fight [him] just cause he’s black or whatever color he is, just make friends with them.”

This action video provided students with several opportunities to take action by making public statements, verbally and in writing, about strategies for stopping violence and racism and for promoting respect. Even students who did not speak during the video wrote questions and answered each other’s questions in writing and during practice interviews. By hearing each other’s ideas about actions they could take individually and collectively, and by extending and revisioning their own thinking each time they wrote, asked, and answered questions about intolerance and justice, they multiplied potential meanings, language, and actions regarding (in)tolerance. The video also created a space and time for members of Room 18 to practice and experience social action with other classes.

In the final days of the school year, the children initiated their own authentic action step, refusing to look on as bystanders at the middle school orientation facilitated by the middle school staff. During the orientation, Spanish-dominant children were separated from their English-dominant peers and brought to a room to take a language test. Room 18 students spoke up, pointing out that the Spanish-speaking children missed out on part of the orientation. When they returned to the classroom, many very upset, they told Irene that they needed to discuss it further. They identified the unfairness of providing an informative school tour to the English-dominant students that partially excluded the Spanish-dominant students. These upstanding students brainstormed actions that they could take to inform the middle school about the injustice of this segregation. Although they were not able to take this action themselves on the last day of school, Irene did carry their message to the middle school orientation team. The students in Room 18 had grown in their capacity to recognize acts of injustice, to articulate and deliberate the issues, and to take collective action to make a difference.

Discussion

Facing the challenges inherent in teaching controversial issues is essential if we take seriously the importance of teaching young people to deal forthrightly and effectively with the plethora of political controversies facing society. (Hess 2004, p. 261)

Various educators have questioned the appropriateness of Holocaust education in the elementary grades; Schweber (2008) drew this conclusion after following a class of third graders and Totten (1999) argued against Holocaust studies for grades K-4. Others have countered that children in the upper elementary grades can manage the difficult content of the Holocaust when engaged in it thoughtfully (e.g., Supple 1998a, b) and that it is important to provide young learners with a foundation for understanding justice, discrimination, and social responsibility (e.g., Cowan and Maitles 2007).

This ethnographic study demonstrates the possibilities of Holocaust studies and education for critical citizenship in one-fifth grade class. Irene and her students had time to establish and maintain a safe class community for exploring difficult social, political, and moral questions throughout the course of an entire school year, an opportunity rarely available at middle and secondary levels. With support from her colleagues, school, and classroom families, Irene carefully constructed a long-term approach to education about (in)tolerance and social responsibility that included an in-depth study of the Holocaust. Throughout the Tolerance Focus, students were building on social and academic practices that they had constructed together from the first day of school. These social practices emphasized collaborative meaning making, student responsibility, and respect; various academic practices helped students to make intertextual connections across texts to deepen their understandings of the Holocaust.

Although Irene and her fifth-grade teaching partners were not privy to recently published frameworks when they designed their own Tolerance Focus, they were putting theory into practice through their own pedagogical decisions. By making personal connections to events in the texts, students could better see the significance of the Holocaust and examine tolerance and intolerance in their own lives. Students were provided with many resources, including each other's knowledge, as they grappled with these complex issues. Through a variety of artistic, written, and spoken responses, they could each find their own "voice" in articulating these understandings and further develop that voice and language over time. These multiple responses also provided many avenues for expressing empathy and compassion, essential components of learning tolerance and respect (McCall 1996).

Irene constructed with the students a framework for interpreting texts about the Holocaust that supported them in expanding their repertoires beyond sorrow and retaliation to a more comprehensive set of understandings. As they encountered and responded to a range of texts, the class constructed a common view of tolerance that emphasized action and compassion for others' points of view and circumstances. By the end of the Tolerance Focus, most students expressed an understanding that justice and tolerance requires individual and group action.

As important as it is to "talk the talk", learning tolerance necessitates learning ways to "walk the talk" (Bryan 1993), and Irene included several opportunities for their young learners to act on what they learned. Writing, drawing, and speaking were interwoven as tools for social action in this fifth-grade class. Teachers construct with their students opportunities for learning, and how these students take up these opportunities can vary (Tuyay et al. 1995). It is possible that Wall of Remembrance tiles, Museum of Tolerance essays, and action video statements reflected a desire to please the teacher or expressed surface-level understandings rather than genuine pleas for justice. However, the mature and thoughtful engagement of the students throughout the Tolerance Focus suggests that they were more likely taking advantage of these opportunities to express their understandings and hopes.

Furthermore, the authentic action that they took on the last day of school suggests that the class, in general, applied the lessons of the Tolerance Focus to their own lived experience when they were segregated during the middle school orientation. Cowan and Maitles (2007) argue for the power of Holocaust education to contribute to students' development of political literacy, which includes the exercise of power in local contexts as well as national and global contexts. The students in Room 18 demonstrated not only political literacy, but also what Freire (1970, 2005) refers to as *conscientização*, or critical consciousness, which lies at the heart of critical citizenship: when they saw their classmates being segregated,

these young learners demonstrated the capacity to locate and name an injustice occurring in their lives, then dialogue and deliberate about the nature of this injustice and take some action to address it (Jennings and Da Matta 2009; Jennings et al. *in press*). Developing critical consciousness and action was the ultimate goal of the Tolerance Focus.

This study provides a close examination of one teacher's approach to teaching about the Holocaust and education for critical citizenship, showing both why and how such topics can be taught in the upper elementary grades. The approach taken by Irene and her colleagues highlights the importance of long-term engagements, a layered curriculum that supports children in building understandings over time, and multiple opportunities for making meaning together. This approach includes many features highlighted in recently published frameworks, including empathy-building, a focus on rescue and resistance, a study of the bystander response, building a knowledge base about the Holocaust, and stories of individual experience (Burtonwood 2002). A central feature of several frameworks that is less evident in the Tolerance Focus is an examination of Judaism or a historical frame regarding anti-Semitism, elements found lacking across many secondary curricula in the United States and Britain (Gallant and Hartman 2001; Short 1994; Short and Carrington 1992). As upper-elementary teachers develop their curricula, it is important for them to consider how to incorporate this context and knowledge, as Irene, Beth, & Phoebe did in following years.

After 15 years living among these learners, I continue to gain insight from this study. While I was wrapping up the ethnography, the American public education system was well along a course of standardization and accountability. In the years that followed, Irene and her colleagues continued to receive support for the Tolerance Focus but found it hampered by the requirements of scripted curricula and increasing emphasis on grade-level tests. Yet this study stands as a telling case, showing how educational theory and practice can be expanded and become more socially just. As these learners engaged in a rigorous curriculum and strengthened their capacity to engage with complex ideas and express their growing minds, they also developed a strong foundation for critical citizenship—a foundation that is difficult to capture on a standardized test, but crucial to our national and global future.

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