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# Violins of Hope



*Preparation guide for students in Cleveland's Jewish educational settings  
for visits to Cleveland's Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage's Violins of Hope exhibit*

**Fall, 2015**



## **VIOLINS OF HOPE**

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**What enduring understanding will students attain by the end of their focus on the Violins of Hope exhibit?**

“Hope is like peace, it is not a gift from God. It is a gift we can only give to each other.” Elie Wiesel



**What essential questions will students be able to answer?**

1. What is the importance of having and giving hope?
2. How can music, and those who create it, give hope from one person to another?
3. As Jews, how central is hope to who we are as a people, and as a religion?

**Originally developed for grades 6-12.** Teachers should adapt this guide to the level and background of their students. Note that in Ohio, many middle schools use Holocaust literature as an 8<sup>th</sup> grade focus (often at the end of the school year). Most high schools teach Holocaust at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade world history sequence. Older students will come to the exhibit with historical knowledge, and younger ones will not. On the other hand, students in our Jewish educational settings will probably have heard of the Holocaust through annual Yom Hasho'ah commemorations, as well as units they often take in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

With the Holocaust as their focus, students working with this learning guide will consider:

- the meaning of hope
- the ways in which hope gets passed from one person to another, and
- the importance of hope in the face of oppression

This lesson will provide students the background they need to enter the *Violins of Hope* exhibit with some basic understandings, as well as curiosity.

**Timing.** Designed to prepare students to visit the *Violins of Hope* exhibit, this lesson may be accomplished in 40-60 minutes. Teachers with only 15 minutes of prep time should not include the activity centers, but may wish to offer the “Identification Cards” for use at the exhibit.

**Materials needed.**

1. A copy of Elie Wiesel’s quote, either written on the board, or as a poster (check the JECCMarketplace.com for the latter; created poster-size) – RESOURCE SHEET A
2. Digital projector and laptop, or another way to show videos from the internet
3. Notecards and a writing instrument for each student
4. Copy of the “Visual History of the Holocaust” for every two students – RESOURCE SHEET B
5. Printed station instructions & activity sheets – in the LEARNING CENTER PACKET.  
These may be printed on 8 ½ x 11 paper and glued into a regular folder, or they may each be enlarged and glued onto 3 different large display boards. The background/instruction sheets would look better printed in color.
6. Musician identification card for each student (with the 3 women) – in the LEARNING CENTER PACKET
7. Violinist identification card for each student (with one of the people featured in the exhibit) – in the LEARNING CENTER PACKET

**Background.** The *Violins of Hope* exhibit explores three themes of the Holocaust by focusing on the violinists who were caught in the horrors of this time period: human spirit, survival and resistance. Some of the violins were played only in the years prior, while others helped their owners survive spiritually and physically during the Holocaust. And, whether intentionally or not, most that were actively played during the Holocaust gave hope to their owners and those who heard their music.

In the lesson, using Elie Wiesel’s quote as a guide, the students will explore the stories of three musicians from the Holocaust that are not featured in the exhibit. They will explore the idea and meaning of hope and put into context why hope was important at that time. Finally, they will learn how hope is passed from one person to another, both intentionally and unintentionally, and how that support was important to survival.

## LESSON OUTLINE:

### Introducing the Exhibit:

Find out **which students have heard of the *Violins of Hope* exhibit**, and if any have visited yet with their school, friends or parents. Tell these students specifically, that today's lesson will offer a different lens on the violins.

As an overview to the exhibit and to set context for the students, **show the video clip** that's a trailer for the book, *Violins of Hope*, and features James Grymes, the author of the book and the curator of the exhibit: <http://tinyurl.com/oz3ftrlz> (stop at 2:10). It introduces the exhibit and begins an exploration of music and hope in the face and adversity. In the video, Grymes talks of the role of violins in the Holocaust. He says that for some, the violin was a liberator (musicians used their music to escape Europe) and for others it was a comforter (the violins provided a sense of normalcy and dignity).

- Give each student a notecard and writing instrument and ask that as they watch, to **look for the reasons why Grymes and others call these instruments (and the exhibit), “violins of hope.”**
- After the clip is done, give students a few moments to jot down any other notes they wish to capture from the video.
- Ask students also to **write on the other side of the card any situations that would make them feel hopeless.** [Examples might be: hunger, homelessness, no money, loss of rights, and loss of family or friends etc.]

First see if students have any **global comments** about the video, or questions it raised for them. Then, have students **share some of their thoughts of hope and hopelessness**, in the Holocaust and if they are willing to, also personally. [*This discussion should be relatively short.*]

### Introducing Hopefulness and Hopelessness in Nazi Regime:

To quickly brief students on the history and issues of the time period and to begin to connect students to the concept of hope to the Holocaust, **offer pairs of students RESOURCE SHEET B: *Visual History of the Holocaust.*** Ask them to consider together:

- What stories these pictures tell of the Holocaust
- In what ways these pictures similar to, or opposites of, the things they wrote down regarding hope.

**Share the Elie Wiesel quote.** [Either write it on the board or share an enlarged poster or projection of the quote.] “Hope is like peace, it is not a gift from God. It is a gift we can only give to each other.”

*Elie Wiesel is a well-known author whose memoirs of his experiences in the Holocaust are read in many schools. This quote tells us how hope is passed from one person to another, even if done so by accident. All of the people both from the lesson today, and the people featured in the exhibit, gave or were given hope in the Holocaust, and they all did so through their music.*

After showing your class the quote, have them hold a **thumbs up if they agree** with the quote or a **thumbs down if they don't**. Discuss together:

- Why they chose their answer.
- Why they think this quote was chosen as the focal point of this lesson related to their *Violins of Hope* visit.

### **Learning About Hope**

The main activity for this lesson has been developed as three stations that feature examples of women who either gave or received hope via their music during the time of the Holocaust.

**STEP ONE: Show the video clip of all three women** (Anita Lasker-Walfish, Zdenka Fantalova, and Alice Sommer-Herz) talking about the importance of the music and how it gave them hope during their experiences in the Holocaust: <http://zapt.io/tskkngsq>

*This is a clip from the movie, The Lady in Number 6, an Oscar winning documentary about Alice's experiences. Watching this before doing the activities will provide some emotional connection to the material before the students begin. Feel free to talk about the video and what students might anticipate.*

**STEP TWO:**

To set the context for the activity stations:

1. **Hand out Identification Cards:** These cards have information on them about the musicians featured at each station. Their stories are good examples of the core focus for that particular station. Ask students to read about the featured person prior to starting each station. The QR codes will lead them to videos of each of the women featured; these are from 2-11 minutes in length, so they are probably better viewed at home. Or, if students finish an activity before others are ready to rotate, they could watch on a smartphone or tablet.
2. **Split the class into 3 groups** and tell students that as they go through each of the stations they should **think about the Elie Wiesel quote** that was presented at the beginning of the lesson and how it relates to each station.

Then, have students cycle through the stations (each will take 8-10 minutes)

**"Annie Sommer-Hertz Station" - This station is about relating music to hope.** Students will take a look at the story of Annie Sommer-Hertz, a pianist who gave concerts in the ghetto. Students will then listen to a recording of survivors from the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp singing Hatikvah ("The Hope," now Israel's national anthem). They will have a discussion together about the significance of this song being sung in a concentration camp after the war.

**“Anita Lasker-Walfish Station” - This station is about the give and take of hope.**

Students will read about Anita Lasker-Walfish and the hope that she received from her orchestra conductor, Alma Rose, while playing in the Auschwitz women’s orchestra. The students will then fill out a worksheet which will have them think about a time that they gave or received hope. The students will then come together and discuss how hope is a gift.

**“Zdenka Fantalova Station” - This station is about the meaning of hope.** Students will read about Zdenka Fantalova, who recalls how music in the ghetto gave her a specific kind of hope. As a group the students will then take the words provided and re-order them into a group definition of hope.

When students have completed each of the three stations, ask them to **answer the personal reflection questions on the back of their Identification Card.**

STEP THREE: Within the context of the Essential Questions that are shaping this lesson, as well as the Wiesel quote, **spend some time debriefing what students learned at the stations**

1. What is the importance of having and giving hope?
2. How can music, and those who create it, give hope from one person to another?
3. In what way do the stories of three violinists support or oppose Elie Wiesel’s quote, “Hope is like peace, it is not a gift from God. It is a gift we can only give to each other?”

**Transition to visiting the exhibit**

**Give each student one of the three “find me” ID cards for the exhibit.** These cards have a profile of one of the musicians featured in the exhibit. This is to connect them personally to one of the stories that they will hear on their trip.

Tell each student they can may view the information attached to each QR code either prior to their visit, or after. Ask them to **answer the reflection questions posed on their card after viewing the violin** that it matches.

OPTIONAL: Print out ID cards and take them to the exhibit to make sure that the students have them during their tour, as they might forget them at home.

**After visiting the exhibit**

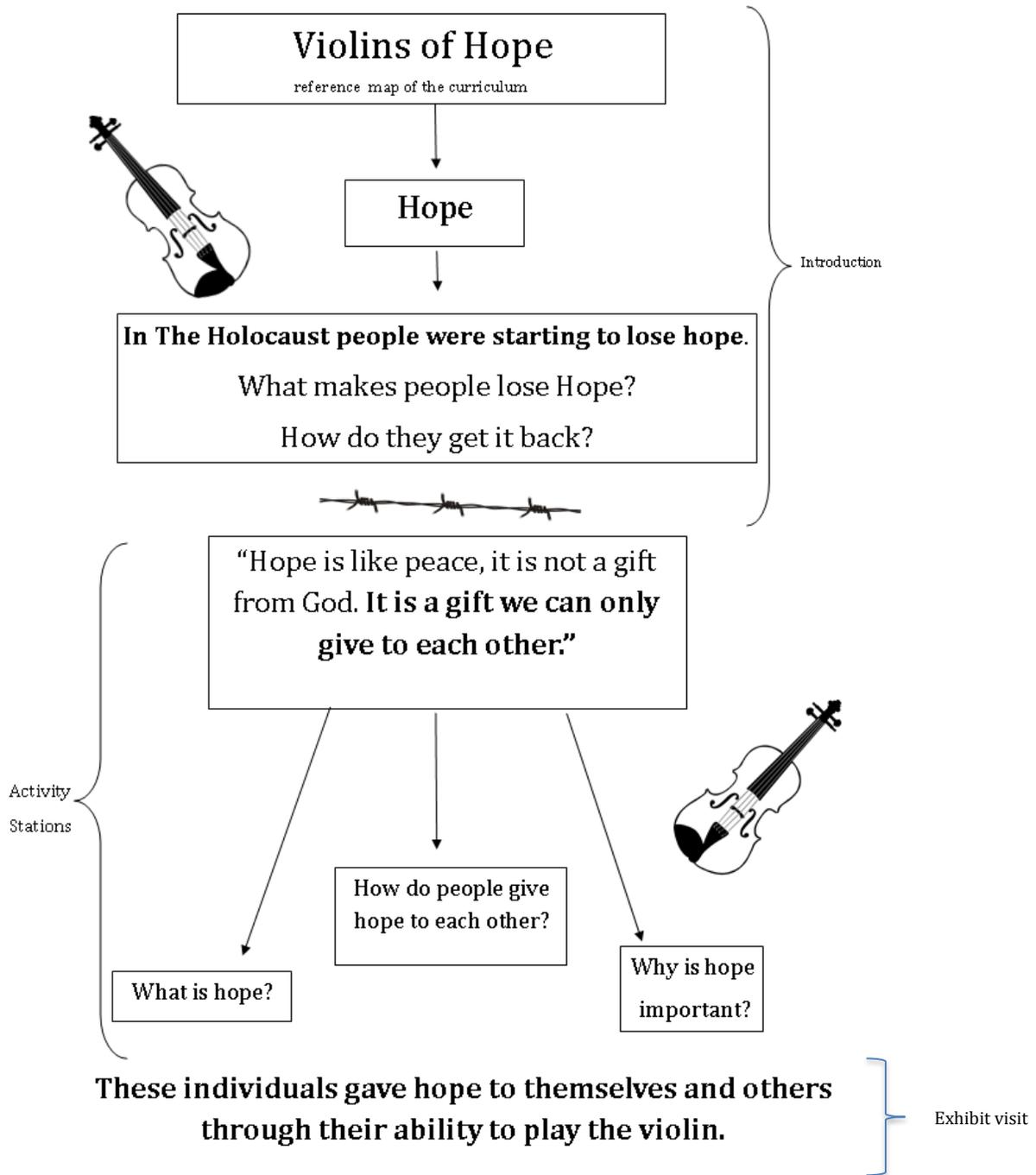
Possible discussion questions:

- What was most interesting to them during their visit?
- If considering the messages of the exhibit in its entirety, did they all featured violins seem to provide hope to at least one person? If “not,” which ones were they?
- How did each of the three individuals you were looking for specifically provide hope to others? [Consider having students share what they learned.]
- Did you find different kinds of violin-stories of the ways that music, and those who created it, gave hope from one person to another?
- In what way do the stories of three violinists support or oppose Elie Wiesel’s quote, “Hope is like peace, it is not a gift from God. It is a gift we can only give to each other.”
- An instrument and music are both tools. What are the tools you (the student) use to give hope to other people?
- Might you have given the exhibit a different name? What?
- In what ways did the exhibit help them see how central is hope to who we are as a Jewish people, and as a religion? What else might they have wanted to know?
- Why do you think it was so important to the Jewish community to support this particular exhibit? What is its importance to our Jewish future? What might be its importance to those who aren’t Jewish?

## “Visual Map” of the Lesson Outline

For teacher use, only

*This map of the suggested lesson and exhibit visit, offers a visual overview of the flow of the learning, with a focus on the concept of “hope.”*





**RESOURCE SHEET A: ENDURING UNDERSTANDING**

“Hope is like peace, it is not a gift from God. It is a gift we can only give to each other.”

Elie Wiesel





## RESOURCE SHEET B: Visual History of the Holocaust

### A Visual History of the Holocaust



