

# ON-DEMAND LEARNING CENTER

## VIEWING GUIDE



## Memory and Legacy: Preparing to Learn from Descendants of Holocaust Survivors

### Overview

In this classroom video, social studies teacher Paul Capobianco facilitates a discussion on the nuances of how Holocaust survivor testimonies are passed down, remembered, and shared. This video explores how framing a lesson around the importance of memory using classroom discussion and journaling can prepare students to learn from survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants.

In preparing students to hear from a descendant of a Holocaust survivor, Mr. Capobianco encourages students to think about the significance of a single story and how identity is shaped by experiences. As he moves through the classroom discussion, Mr. Capobianco prompts students to discuss the following questions:

- How can a survivor's Holocaust experience affect the identity of that survivor's child?
- What do you think could be passed on from a survivor to their children?
- What choices might survivors have to make, in terms of sharing their stories with their children?

Mr. Capobianco brings students safely out of the conversation by making space for emotional engagement through journaling on what they learned. To close the lesson, Mr. Capobianco reads Rabbi Joseph Polak's "The Last Witness," the final chapter of his memoir *After the Holocaust the Bells Still Ring*, to encourage a sense of collective responsibility to share and preserve memory.



## Questions to Consider

1. To encourage students to consider the power and uniqueness of memory throughout the lesson, Mr. Capobianco frames the discussion with the James Young quote, “[M]emory is never seamless but always a montage of collected fragments, recomposed by each person and generation.” Why is this framing important when preparing to welcome survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants into the classroom?

2. Throughout the conversation, Mr. Capobianco asks students to think about how Holocaust survivors choose to share their story with their children and to consider the extent to which these decisions impact the identity of second-generation descendants of Holocaust survivors. Why do you think he uses these questions to prepare students to hear from a child of a Holocaust survivor? Why is it important for students to consider the complexity of these decisions?

3. At 5:09, Mr Capobianco shares that he intentionally ended the class by reading Rabbi Joseph Polak’s words from “The Last Witness” so students could understand the opportunity to learn from people who are connected to survivors of the Holocaust and their responsibility. How can you use classroom conversations and other teaching strategies to instill a sense of responsibility in your students to share this knowledge?

## FEATURED

Paul Capobianco, Social  
Studies Teacher  
8th Grade, Atrium School  
Watertown, MA

## VIDEO GOALS

Watch this video to:

- Discover how to help your students explore the significance of the testimony of descendants (children and grandchildren) of Holocaust survivors before they come to your class as a speaker.
- Learn how an educator can use questions and discussion prompts to invite emotional engagement, ethical reflection, and intellectual rigor.
- Explore how to help your students recognize a sense of responsibility to share and preserve memory.

## LESSON RESOURCES

[Holocaust and Human Behavior](#), Chapters 11 and 12

[Lesson: Using Testimony to Teach](#)

[Teaching Strategy: Journals in a Facing History Classroom](#)

“The Last Witness,” an excerpt from *After the Holocaust the Bells Still Ring* by Rabbi Joseph Polak

