

Introduction

This teaching material was developed in 2012, as part of the Raoul Wallenberg Memorial Year and it is connected to a video clip series from testimonies of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive. The chosen excerpts present interviewees –Jewish survivors and/or participated as Wallenberg’s collaborators in the rescue work – remembering the Swedish diplomat.

Founded by Steven Spielberg after he completed the film *Schindler's List* in 1994, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute was established to collect and preserve the testimonies of survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust. Today, the Institute is part of the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts & Sciences at the University of Southern California; its mission is to overcome prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry—and the suffering they cause—through the educational use of the Institute’s visual history testimonies.

The Institute’s Visual History Archive is one of the largest digital archives in the world. Its depth and complexity make it into a unique educational and research resource. The Archive contains almost 52 000 video interviews, made with Jewish survivors, homosexual survivors, Jehovah’s witness survivors, liberators and witnesses of the liberation, political prisoners, rescuers and aid providers, Roma survivors, survivors of Eugenics policies and of war crime trials participants. The interviews were recorded in 56 countries and in 32 languages. In Hungary, all testimonies of the Archive can be accessed from the library of the Central European University.

The primary objective of our teaching material is to ease the educational work with this topic for colleagues both in and outside regular classrooms and to provide an alternative for teaching the Holocaust on a personalized level, show how various historic events were experienced by individuals and to provide ideas, inspiration leading to the discussion of extremely important moral issues and lessons.

The module might be used in different classes, it might be related to different subjects. The flexible structure of the module allows the teachers to adapt it to their goals and/or classes.

We would like to emphasise that the videos entail several ways of processing them, the attached educational material offers only one of the possible alternatives. Educators working with the material will surely think of many other variations both in terms of the structure and the actual activities as the clips contain a lot of information illustrating historic facts and provide several topics worth of discussion.

When using video interviews in class it is worth noting a few general points relating to the media itself. Understanding and consciousness about these points largely facilitates the processing and the educational efficacy. Video interviews provide help to the students to get to know history from a personal, individual point of view. As it presents individual persons, it is a good tool to avoid generalisations and stereotypes. As the interviewee does not only tell about facts but also reflects on these facts, students can be easily led to discover the difference

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between facts and opinions, which is one of the fundamental pillars of cultivating critical thinking.

The videos are easily understandable clips, but they are excerpts taken from the flow of the story so it is indispensable to possess appropriate historic background knowledge and to make sure that this is at the disposal of our students too. The supplementary materials of this study material serve this purpose, especially the detailed historic chronology. An understanding of the context is essential to grasp the decisions and moves of the interviewee. We also have to know that the person giving the testimony describes the events of a given time and space and his/her relation to these also in a given time and space. This does not mean then that all survivors of similar events would remember it in the same way, as several factors – geographic location, year, immediate surroundings etc. – defined the events.

History is a multitude of personal stories and experiences. Generalisation and simplification can lead to false conclusions. In our educational materials we attempted to sound several ‘voices’ so that students can understand all this and familiarize themselves with the ways different people experienced similar events and how they react to these. It is also worth paying attention to the place and social context where the testimony was recorded. Local customs, sensitivity, social surroundings are often detected in interviews recorded at different locations. If this is highlighted to our students they receive further background information beyond what is said in the interview and their own historical knowledge. We can develop their comprehension and media literacy skills if we ask them to think about who the person in the interview really is, why and under what circumstances does (s)he shares their story. This way they can also familiarize themselves with the background of the testimony to a certain extent.

It is important to draw attention to that the single clips are momentary snapshots of a whole life story. This is why it is useful – if only briefly – to familiarize the students with further details of the interviewees’ stories, possibly with their short biographies (see appendix “**Brief bios**”).

Each interviewee and every life experience is unique. Although others could have experienced the same event, everyone remembers it in their own way; people can respond in different ways and can attach different significance to particular events. Those giving the testimonies may have the most different backgrounds and their collective memory contributes greatly to the understanding of particular historic events. Because of this it is worth listening to several testimonies and presenting to our students other sources along with the videos.

When using video interviews in education, we should not forget that the testimonies are based on memory, which might be precise and accurate or imprecise and vague. This could have many reasons. Memory may be influenced by the age of the interviewee at the time of the events and even the kind of information they might have obtained about contemporary events over the years since then. We should not ignore that most interviewees revive the most tragic events of their lives. This is a staggering experience even many years after the events. The recording was usually made on one occasion, on one day only. It can happen in such cases that the interviewee makes mistakes, leaves out details or forgets about something.

In our study material we tried to account for as many of the above-mentioned aspects as possible. The experts represent different perspectives of Jewish survivors and rescuers who

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met Raoul Wallenberg or collaborated with him, and one of his family members who can give a special insight into her brother's life. With the aid of the testimonies, we can learn more about Wallenberg the hero and the man.

When viewing the video excerpts it is important to talk with the students about what other forms of behaviour made international, diplomatic and individual rescues necessary and that most of the Hungarian society chose to conduct themselves as passive observers, bystanders or even chose or drifted into the role of the collaborator or perpetrator.

Discussion about the significance and possibility of choice is particularly important. The story of the Holocaust, just like the story of Wallenberg, cannot be taught solely through the story of the rescuers. We cannot disregard the complexity of the situation and the variety of behaviours that these people present: we would provide a simplified or even distorted picture to our students.

We have to talk with our students about contemporary cases of discrimination, persecutions, responsibility and assistance and about examples of these that appear in their more immediate surroundings. The survivors tell and told their stories explicitly in order that forthcoming generations can learn from them. So that they can understand that they bear responsibility: not for the past but for their future decisions, their choices in the future.

Components of the study material connected to the films:

- Introduction (sheet 01)
- General description (sheet 02)
- Content and process of the module (sheet 03)
- Chronology (sheet 04)
- Brief bios (sheet 05)
- Useful sources (sheet 06)
- Keywords for teachers (sheet 07)
- Card1 (sheet 08)
- Card2 (sheet 09)
- Card3 (sheet 10)
- Card4 (sheet 11)
- Card5 (sheet 12)
- Lessons authors (sheet 13)
- Photos (Wallenberg's faces and Wallenberg memorials)