

RESCUE DURING THE HOLOCAUST

During the Holocaust, rescuers took a stand against hatred and violence, making the decision to act and save lives. While putting their own lives at risk these individuals helped to save thousands from certain death at the hands of the Nazi's and their collaborators.

Grade Level: 6–12

Time Required: Two class periods

Rationale: During the Holocaust a small minority of people risked their lives to rescue the Jews of Europe. Teachers, businessmen, diplomats, housewives, journalists and farmers were a few of the individuals that comprised this extraordinary group known as, rescuers. It is important for students to see that during a time of war and in an environment plagued by hatred and intolerance, that there were individuals who made decisions to help others, even when the majority of people looked the other way. While learning about the Holocaust students often question, “Why did some people help?” “Why didn’t more people help?” “Who helped rescue people during the Holocaust?” This lesson will examine individuals who were rescuers during the Holocaust as well as individual decision making and the factors for choosing to act or not to act during a difficult time in history. By examining decision making during the Holocaust, students will be able to reflect on decision making in their own lives and the effect their decisions have on others

Note: *Students should have background knowledge and context of Holocaust history prior to this lesson plan. Cross curricular collaboration between the history and art teacher will help to accomplish the latter.*

ACTIVITY #1: INTRODUCTION TO RESCUE

Students will watch the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum video, “Voices of Rescue from the Holocaust.” “Voices of Rescue from the Holocaust,” provides an overview of rescue during the Holocaust through eyewitness testimony, historical footage and photographs. (Film running time: 12:28).

<http://www.ushmm.org/remember/days-of-remembrance/past-days-of-remembrance/2012-days-of-remembrance/2012-theme-video>

Rescuer Profiles: <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20120306-dor12-profiles-of-rescuers.pdf>

Interviewee Profiles: <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20120306-dor12-profiles-of-interviewees.pdf>

ACTIVITY #2: RESCUERS

Students will be divided into groups. Each group will have a different rescuer and primary source documents which illustrate the actions of each rescuer during the Holocaust. The teacher will distribute envelopes containing a biography and primary sources such as photographs and documents. In groups students will read about each rescuer and examine the primary sources and answer questions about each source. Students will become “experts” on their rescuer.

Each group’s should include:

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum- Rescue- Historical Background Article <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005185>
- Rescuer biography, photographs and documents
- Rescuer question worksheet
- Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

Biographies and Primary Sources

Varian Fry

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Biography: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005594>
- Primary Sources – Attachments A-F

Chiune Sugihara

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Biography: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005594>
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005587>
- Primary Sources – Attachments G-J

William and Morton Thalimer

- Biography: Attachment Q
- Primary Sources – Attachments K-P

ACTIVITY EXTENSION

- *Instead of providing the primary sources for each rescuer have students search for primary sources on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website (USHMM.org). Students could also research Holocaust rescuers not profiled in this lesson plan.*
- *Have students tell the story of each rescuer through the primary sources provided. Using the photographs and documents students can create a story board with captions for the rescuer that they studied.*
- *Have students visit the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous website. Students have the opportunity to learn more about people that made the decision to rescue Jews during the Holocaust as well as submit a question to a rescuer. <http://www.jfr.org/pages/education/for-students/ask-a-rescuer>*

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT RESCUE DURING THE HOLOCAUST?

Books

- Borden, Louise. *His Name Was Raoul Wallenberg: Courage, Rescue and Mystery During World War II*. Houghton Mifflin, 2012.
- Fox, A. L., and Abraham-Podietz, E. *Ten Thousand Children: The Kindertransport*. New York: Behrman House, 1998.
- Killough McClafferty, Carla. *In Defiance of Hitler: The Secret Mission of Varian Fry*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.
- Levine, E. *Darkness Over Denmark*. New York: Holiday House, 1999.
- Mochizuki, Ken. *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*. New York: Lee and Low Books, Inc., 1997.
- Pettit, J. *A Place to Hide*. Minneapolis: Sagebrush Education Resources, 1993.

Glossary

- *Yad Vashem*: The Jewish people's living memorial to the Holocaust. World center for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust.¹
- *Righteous Among the Nations*: A designation given by Yad Vashem to non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. 25, 271 people have been recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous.²

¹ Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. "About Yad Vashem." Yad Vashem, 2014. Web. 17 Sep. 2014.

² Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. "About the Righteous." The Righteous Among the Nations. Yad Vashem, 2014. Web. 17 Sep. 2014.



Attachment A

Varian Fry walking along the street in Marseilles.

Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Annette Fry*



Attachment B

View from above of the refugees lined up outside the American consulate in Marseilles

Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hiram Bingham*



Attachment C

Portrait of Walter Meyerhof in Banyuls-sur-Mer while waiting for a visa to the U.S.

Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hiram Bingham*



Attachment D

Varian Fry views a Chagall painting outside the artist's home in Gordes. Pictured from left to right are Varian Fry, Marc Chagall, Bella Chagall and Hiram Bingham (behind Bella)

Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Walter Ernst Meyerhof*

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AFFIDAVIT
IN
LIEU OF PASSPORT

9500
America
via
14-4-74
SECRETARIA

Republic of France
Department of Bouches du Rhône
City of Marseille
Consulate of the United States
of America



BEFORE me, Myles Standish, Vice Consul of
the United States of America, at Marseille, France,
duly commissioned and qualified, personally appeared
Walter Ernst MEYERHOF who, being duly sworn
according to law, deposes and says:

That his full and true name is Walter Ernst
MEYERHOF,

That he resides at Banyuls-sur-Mer, France,

That he was born on April 29, 1922, at Kiel,
Germany;

That he is of German nationality but is unable
to obtain a German passport on account of conditions
prevailing in France at the present time.

And further deponent saith not.

Walter Ernst MEYERHOF

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 2nd day of January
1941.

Myles Standish
Myles Standish

Vice Consul of the United States
of America.

P. V. D. E.-SECCAO INTERNACIONAL
LISBOA
5/4/41
VALIDO POR 90 DIAS
O ADJUNTO

P. V. D. E.-Secção Internacional
Lisboa

Nota dada em 5/5/74

Attachment E

Affadavit in lieu of Passport
issued by Myles Standish, Vice
Consul of the United States to
German Jewish refugee Walter
Meyerhof.

Caption Credit: *United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum*
Photo Credit: *United States
Holocaust Memorial Muse-
um, courtesy of Walter Ernst
Meyerhof*

Walter Meyerhof

December 17, 1940

Mr. E. Freeman Matthews,
American Embassy,
Vichy, Allier.

Dear Mr. Matthews,

I wonder if you will be good enough to lend your special support to Mr. Walter Meyerhof's demand for a "sortie" visa.

Walter is the son of Professor Otto Meyerhof, biologist, who is now on the Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. Professor and Mrs. Meyerhof left France some months ago, but Walter was not able to accompany them as at the time he did not have his American visa. He made his demand for a "sortie" visa and "titre de voyage" at the Préfecture of Perpignan on December 5th. At the Préfecture they told him that his demand had been accepted with an "avis favorable" and that his dossier would be at Vichy by December 10th.

Walter passed the Kundt commission at Le Cheylard and he is eager to leave France as soon as possible to join his parents.

I should be very grateful indeed to do whatever you can to help him obtain his "sortie" visa without a long delay.

Yours very truly,

Varian M. Fry
Director.

VMF/eg.

Attachment F

Letter written by Varian Fry to the American consul at the U.S. Embassy in Vichy seeking his help in obtaining an exit visa for Walter Meyerhof.

Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*
Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Walter Ernst Meyerhof*



Attachment G

Portrait of Chiune Sugihara used in his passport.

Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hiroki Sugihara*



Attachment H

Group Portrait of Jewish refugees in Kobe, Japan, who escaped from Europe with visa signed by Chiune Sugihara

Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Walter Susan Blumen*



Attachment I

The Sugihara family departs by train from Kaunas to Berlin.
Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*
Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,*
courtesy of Hiroki Sugihara



Attachment J

Three Jewish ghetto officials stand at one of the gates to the
Kovno ghetto.
Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*
Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,*
courtesy of George Kadish/Zvi Kadushin



Attachment K

Richmond Businessman, William B. Thalhimer, Sr.
Photo Credit: *Virginia Holocaust Museum, courtesy of the Thalhimer Family Archives*



Attachment L

Professor Dr. Kurt Bondy, Director of the Gross Breesen agricultural training center walks his horse Edgar.
Caption Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*
Photo Credit: *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eric F. Bowes*



Attachment M

Passport of Eva Jacobsohn (Loew). Eva was a student that lived and worked at Hyde Farmlands.
Permission to reprint by Jacquelin Jacobsohn



Attachment O

Eva Jacobsohn (Loew) feeding a cow.
Photo Credit: *Virginia Holocaust Museum*

Commissioner of Immigration

Washington, D. C.

Mr. A. M. Warren
Chief of Visa Division
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen:

There is herein presented for your consideration the facts relative to the proposed immigration from Germany to the United States of approximately twenty-seven individuals of Jewish faith and German nationality whose destination will be a farm of approximately 1500 acres in Nottoway County, Virginia, near the town of Burkeville.

The undersigned, William B. Thalhimer, has for a number of years, out of solely humane motives, interested himself in the placement, after their arrival in this country, of German-Jewish immigrants who have been admitted to United States since the year 1933. He has to this time had little, if anything to do with any problems of immigration or admission.

In keeping with this interest of placement, a year or more ago it occurred to him that were these new arrivals to be settled upon farms in the rural communities of this country it would relieve their increasing concentration in the cities and in addition would hasten the process of rehabilitation. Accordingly he addressed this suggestion by letter to the National Coordinating Committee, a voluntary relief organization, non-

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William Thalhimer to A.M. Warren, August 12, 1938, [file 811.1184 Hyde Farm-lands, General Visa Correspondence 1940-1945, Entry A1-704A, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.]

sectarian in nature, of which Dr. Joseph P. Chamberlain, of Columbia University is chairman. The work of this committee is directed to the solution of problems arising in the immigration and placement of immigrants of all denominations from the countries of Europe.

Beyond the acknowledgement of its receipt no notice of or action upon this letter was taken at the time. In January, 1938, however, this letter was discovered in the files of the Committee by a Mr. Frederick W. Borchardt, a representative in the United States of a group of German-Jewish charitable and relief organizations cooperating with the National Coordinating Committee in its work. Mr. Borchardt thereupon communicated with the undersigned inquiring whether he would interest himself personally in the development of a farm project for the placement of immigrants. Upon receiving an affirmative reply he advised the undersigned that the German organizations he represented had for the past two years or more maintained in Germany at Gross Breesen, near Breslau a cooperative farm whose members had been recruited from the sons and daughters (between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five) of upper and middle class German Jewish families who had expressed a firm desire for agriculture as their life's work. These members, the undersigned was advised, have been trained in scientific farming by experienced and competent agriculturalists over an extended period and the results indicated their ability in successful farm operation.

Mr. Borchardt stated that many of these individuals proposed to emigrate from Germany to the United States and that if after their arrival in this country they could be located on a

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William Thalheimer to A.M. Warren, August 12, 1938, [file 811.1184 Hyde Farm-lands, General Visa Correspondence 1940-1945, Entry A1-704A, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.]

farm, he was convinced that such a project would be successful, far more so than were a farm settled with immigrants already in this country who had had no previous experience with farming operations.

Since the establishment of a farm for the placement of immigrants after their arrival in this country was in accordance with his own ideas and since it seemed evident that immigrants trained and experienced in farming would be far more likely to succeed thereon than those without such training and experience, the undersigned stated to Mr. Borchardt that he would see to the purchase of a farm suitable for the purpose and would undertake to have it ready for occupation upon the arrival of the immigrants.

He further stated that he did not believe it wise or expedient to make a grant of the land and necessary farming equipment to the immigrants but proposed that an agreement be entered into between the landowner and the operating group, whereby the latter was to purchase the same at a price equal to its cost plus such sums as would necessarily be advanced for maintenance of the members of the group until such time as they could be self-sustaining as a result of their own labors.

Mr. Borchardt thereupon stated that he approved of the plan, and that he would notify the undersigned when the immigrants would arrive. This conversation took place in late February or early March of 1938.

Thereupon the undersigned after investigating other properties secured an option upon a farm of approximately 1500 acres in Nottoway County, Virginia, upon which was located in addition

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William Thalheimer to A.M. Warren, August 12, 1938, [file 811.1184 Hyde Farm-lands, General Visa Correspondence 1940-1945, Entry A1-704A, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.]

While the farm at Gross Bressen is occupied both by men and women it is of no moment whether the members of the Virginia farm are exclusively male. It has however been stated by Mr. Borchardt that five women desire to be included.

It has been stated above that opportunity is to be afforded to the operating group to purchase the farm with its buildings, improvements and equipment. It is of no interest to the undersigned in what form the internal organization of this operating group is to be cast except insofar as that might bear upon its continued success. He has exactly the same humane interest here that he had in embarking upon this project and no more.

It is to be definitely understood that the operating group is to be entirely separate and distinct from the corporation at present holding the title to the farm, that neither the undersigned nor anyone else who may become associated with him in sharing the expenses of financing the farm are to be members of the operating group, nor are they to share in any of the fruits of the labor of the members of that group.

He feels that the actual internal organization of the operating group should be left for determination until the group is actually integrated at the farm not only because it is not yet known what is best suited for their needs but also because this should be determined by them under the guidance of competent American attorneys. However, the undersigned is advised by his counsel that the operating group should incorporate itself in order that it may acquire and hold property with the least

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William Thalheimer to A.M. Warren, August 12, 1938, [file 811.1184 Hyde Farms, General Visa Correspondence 1940-1945, Entry A1-704A, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.]

possible difficulties. He further suggests that the group consider the creation of shares of stock in this corporation of a very low par value or of no par value, to be issued to its members in return for services rendered to the group, thus reflecting the interest of each in the property of the whole. These shares are under no circumstances to be issued or transferred to anyone outside the group. These suggestions are of course purely tentative and as stated are to be submitted to the operating group for its determination.

However, (and this plan will not be changed) when the operating group shall have perfected whatever organization upon which it shall determine, a contract will be entered into between Hyde Farmlands, Incorporated, and such organization of the operating group, whereby the former will agree to sell and the latter to buy the farm with all of its equipment and improvements at a price equal to their cost plus such sums as have been and may be advanced from time to time for expenses of operation and agricultural supervision, and for the support and maintenance of the operating group. This price is to be payable in small instalments over an extended period of time, no payments to be made during the first year or two of operation, and thereafter in amounts probably increasing slightly each year as the earning ability of the operating group would normally be expected to increase.

It is proposed that a competent and experienced farm manager be employed to direct the activities of the group until some one or more of its members demonstrate their ability to

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William Thalheimer to A.M. Warren, August 12, 1938, [file 811.1184 Hyde Farmlands, General Visa Correspondence 1940-1945, Entry A1-704A, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.]

assume this supervisory work, and it is believed that with this supervision and with the experience and training which the proposed immigrants have already received, that successful operation will result and that within a reasonably short time the entire enterprise should be self-sustaining. It is entirely clear that no payment upon the purchase price of the farm or repayments upon funds advanced can be expected for the first year or two, but to the contrary it is recognized that during such time funds will have to be advanced for food, for clothing, for supervision, for equipment, and for the numerous other requirements of farm life and work.

However it is confidently believed that under the conditions herein outlined over a sufficient period of time the members of this operating group will be able not only to support themselves, but to own the farm with all of its equipment and improvements repaying all funds advanced in the interests of the project and of themselves.

Respectfully submitted,

William B. Thalhimer

*Richmond, Virginia
August 22, 1938*

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William Thalhimer to A.M. Warren, August 12, 1938, [file 811.1184 Hyde Farm-lands, General Visa Correspondence 1940-1945, Entry A1-704A, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives.]

LAW OFFICES
WITT & COHEN
TENTH STREET BUILDING
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

SAM B WITT JR
LEROY R COHEN JR

August 28, 1936.



*Adm'd
9/21/36
Gilly*

Mr. A. M. Warren,
Chief of Visa Division,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Warren:

I enclose herewith memorandum signed by Mr. William B. Thalheimer, of this city, relative to the proposed immigration from Germany to the United States of approximately twenty-seven individuals of Jewish faith and German nationality whose destination will be a farm in Nottoway County, Virginia, near the town of Burkeville. As is indicated the original of this memorandum has been forwarded to the Commissioner of Immigration for his attention.

If there are any facts decided by the Department relative to this project we will be pleased to advance any that are within our knowledge.

I think it proper to state that Mr. Thalheimer, the President of Thalheimer Brothers, Incorporated, one of the largest department stores in the South, for two years served as President of the Richmond Community Fund, an organization of the principal charitable institutions of this city and that he has for many years continuously interested himself in various other charitable and philanthropic enterprises. For references, if such are deemed of importance any bank in the City of Richmond should be able to furnish you with information.

Please accept my thanks for your courtesy in receiving us.

Very truly yours,

LeRoy R. Cohen, Jr.
LeRoy R. Cohen, Jr.

IRC/als

180.626 0/4/0
311.1184 HYDE FARMLANDS

M J

Attachment Q

LeRoy Cohen to A.M. Warren,
August 28, 1936,
[file 811.1184 Hyde Farm-
lands, General Visa Corre-
spondence 1940-1945, Entry
A1-704A, RG 59: General
Records of the Department
of State, National Archives.]

HYDE FARMLANDS, INC.

In 1936, the German Jewish community created Gross Breesen, a non-Zionist agricultural training institute for Jewish students aged 15 to 25, in order to prepare them for possible emigration from Nazi Germany. Dr. Curt Bondy, a renowned social psychologist, was appointed director of the school. Of the Institute's roughly 200 students, 150 ultimately emigrated from Germany to points across the world. Thirty of them found their way to the United States. Most of those who remained in Gross Breesen were eventually killed by the Nazis.

Richmond department store owner, William B. Thalhimer, with the help of his cousin Morton Thalhimer, purchased a farm in Burkeville, Virginia in 1938. He and his lawyer, Leroy Cohen, battled the State Department for almost two years before finally winning visas for 21 Gross Breesen students who came to the farm, Hyde Farmlands, in 1939 and 1940.

The farm housed approximately 30 students for several years, but with life-threatening health problems, the economic burden and the curtailment of a flow of new immigrants, the farm was eventually sold in early 1941. As World War II broke out, every student who could volunteered for the war effort and played key roles as combat soldiers and linguists. Some experienced the liberation of concentration camps, Buchenwald in particular, where they had been imprisoned in 1938 before immigrating. After the war, the students, Dr. Bondy and the Thalhimers remained in contact, held reunions and led fulfilling lives.

For additional information please visit our library.

Attachment R

*From the Virginia Holocaust
Museum Permanent Exhibition*

HOLOCAUST RESCUER QUESTION WORKSHEET

1 What is the name of the rescuer?

2 What country and city is the rescuer from?

3 In a couple of sentences provide the rescuer's background information:

4 What is the country of origin for those individuals that the rescuer helped during the Holocaust?

5 Describe their rescue efforts during the Holocaust:

6 How many people did the rescuer help during the Holocaust?

7 Describe why the rescuer decided to help others:

8 Use four adjectives to describe the character of the rescuer:

9 What happened to the people the rescuer helped?

10 Describe the life of the rescuer after World War II

11 What can people today learn from studying Holocaust rescuers?