

## Lesson Plan

Why is it important to listen to people's stories from the past?

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Through *Otto's Tales: Let's Meet a Volunteer: Honoring Holocaust Survivors*, students will explore how listening to people who have lived through difficult times helps them appreciate freedom and understand the importance of kindness, gratitude, and remembering the past.

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify key vocabulary related to the Holocaust using age-appropriate language.
- Explain why Holocaust survivors share their memories and how their stories help younger generations remember the past.
- Recognize how remembering the past can help people make better choices and treat others with compassion and fairness.
- Describe how listening to someone's story can inspire feelings of gratitude and kindness toward others.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Nursing Home:** A residential facility that provides long-term care and daily assistance to elderly individuals who require help with activities of daily living.
- **Volunteer:** A person who helps others or does a job without getting paid.
- **The Holocaust:** A state-sponsored genocide carried out by Nazi Germany during World War II, targeting Jews and other groups through mass persecution and extermination.
- **Survivor:** A person who remains alive after experiencing life-threatening events or severe hardships.
- **World War II:** A global military conflict that lasted from 1939 to 1945, involving most of the world's nations and resulting in the defeat of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) by the Allied powers (the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union).
- **Nazi:** A member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, a political group that ruled Germany under Adolf Hitler from 1933 to 1945.
- **Jewish:** A person who belongs to the ethnoreligious group descended from the ancient Israelites and practices, or identifies with, the religion of Judaism.
- **Concentration Camp:** A detention facility used by Nazi Germany during World War II to imprison civilians, especially Jews and other targeted groups, under harsh and inhumane conditions.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.L.6, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.R.7

**Academic Subject Areas:** America, American Values, Entrepreneurship



## What You'll Need

- Video: *Otto's Tales: Let's Meet a Volunteer: Honoring Holocaust Survivors* (Click [Here](#))
- Book (optional): *Otto's Tales: Let's Meet a Volunteer: Honoring Holocaust Survivors* (Purchase [Here](#))
- Coloring Page: *Otto's Tales: Let's Meet a Volunteer: Honoring Holocaust Survivors* (Click [Here](#))
- A "Memory Box" filled with small symbolic items (e.g., family photos, well-worn objects like a baseball glove or jewelry, keepsakes, letters or greeting cards, a favorite piece of clothing, handwritten recipes, childhood toys, or music items like records, tapes, or CDs)

## Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm-Up: (10 mins.)

### Note to teachers:

This lesson introduces young students to the **Holocaust** through the personal story of a survivor named Sarah. Following the guidance of child-centered Holocaust education models like Yad Vashem's (The World Holocaust Remembrance Center), the lesson is designed to focus on *emotional anchors* such as kindness, gratitude, remembrance, and resilience. This will give children a way to engage with this difficult subject gently, safely, and meaningfully. The goal is not for students to fully understand these historical events, but to begin to develop empathy and moral awareness through Sarah's experience and the characters' caring responses.

1. Gather students on the carpet and display a *Memory Box*. Introduce the concept of memory along with intentional remembrance with a quick explanation, such as: A Memory Box is a special container where people keep real items that help them remember important parts of their life. These might remind people of their childhood, a special friend, a happy time, a favorite place, or even something hard they went through, but survived. Every item in the box has a story to tell.
2. Prompt discussion about the Memory Box and query students on what might be inside:
  - *What things might be inside this box?*
  - *Why might someone want to save items that help them remember the past?*
3. Pull out one item at a time (e.g., a photograph of a loved one, a toy, a piece of clothing). Invite students to guess what each item might represent. As each item is discussed, name a specific emotion it could be connected to—such as love, sadness, courage, fear, or joy—and encourage students to think about how those feelings relate to memories. Help students understand that these emotions are part of what makes memories powerful and stories important.
4. After exploring the items in the Memory Box, gently introduce the story's central character and historical context to guide students into the main lesson.
  - Let students know they are going to meet a woman named Sarah, who is older now but was once a little girl, just like them, during a very difficult time in history. When Otto and Smidge visit her, she begins to share her memories from the

- Holocaust. By listening to her story, they learn how important it is to be kind, brave, and grateful—even when life is hard.
- Emphasize that Sarah's story helps us see how going through hard times can make us even more grateful for everyday blessings (like a soft bed, piece of pie, music, or freedom), and that listening to someone's story can help us learn and grow.
5. Let students know that they will hear some big and important words in Sarah's story. Some of these words may be new, and some may be difficult to understand. Reassure students that this is okay. These words are part of understanding what Sarah lived through and why her story is important to remember.

Word	Child-Friendly Explanation
Survivor	<i>A person who stayed safe during something very hard or scary. We call Sarah a survivor because she lived through a sad time and now shares her story.</i>
Volunteer	<i>Someone who helps others without being paid. Like Jeremy in the story, volunteers show kindness just because they care.</i>
Holocaust	<i>A very sad time in history when a very bad leader in Germany, named Adolf Hitler, hurt many people, especially Jewish people, just because of who they were. Sarah lived through this time and remembers it, so we can learn from it.</i>
World War II	<i>A big war that happened a long time ago. Countries like America worked together to stop leaders like Hitler, who were hurting people. The war ended, and people were free again.</i>
Concentration Camp	<i>A place where people were taken and forced to stay. They weren't treated fairly, and life there was very hard and sad. Sarah had to live in a place like this, but she survived.</i>
Nazi	<i>A group in Germany that followed a bad leader named Hitler. They believed hurtful things about others, especially Jewish people, and treated them very badly.</i>
Jewish	<i>People who are part of a group or religion called Judaism. They have special traditions, holidays, and stories that go back a long time. Sarah and her family are Jewish.</i>

Watch and Complete: (25 mins.)

1. Present the video (or read aloud) *Otto's Tales: Let's Meet a Volunteer: Honoring Holocaust Survivors* to the class.
2. Play the video (or read the book) in its entirety without interruption to maintain the narrative flow and emotional engagement.
3. Observe students' facial expressions, body language, and verbal responses during the story to assess their engagement, emotional connection, and understanding of key themes (such as survival, kindness, and gratitude). Take note of any moments that

prompt curiosity, confusion, or empathy, and be prepared to support or guide students as needed.

4. After the video, facilitate a class discussion (see *Guidance for Discussion* below) to help students process and reflect on what they've seen. Consider the following questions:
  - Comprehension:
    - *What experiences did Sarah share about her life during World War II?*
    - *How do we know those were difficult times for Sarah? What kinds of clues from the story do we hear?*
  - Emotional Response:
    - *How did Sarah's story make you feel?*
  - Connection to Students' Lives:
    - *Can you think of a time when you felt grateful for something small or simple?*
    - *Why is it important to remember and learn from stories like Sarah's?*

**5. Guidance for Discussion:**

- Prompt students to cite specific examples from the story that illustrate Sarah's experiences and emotions. Allow students to factor in Otto and Smidge, and their reactions to Sarah's story as well.
  - Discuss how recognizing these clues helps us understand Sarah's feelings and the challenges she endured.
  - Ensure that discussions are conducted with sensitivity, allowing students to express their thoughts and feelings in a respectful, safe, and age-appropriate manner.
  - Connect the discussion back to the lesson's objectives, emphasizing themes of resilience, gratitude, and the importance of remembering history.
6. Following the discussion, guide students to reflect on the key themes explored during the lesson. Encourage them to consider what they have learned about Sarah's experiences and the broader historical context.

Wrap-Up: (10 mins.)

**Note to Teachers:**

The "Otto's Tales: Let's Meet a Volunteer: Honoring Holocaust Survivors" coloring page can serve as a formative assessment when paired with reflective prompts and observations. Here's how to implement this:

1. Provide each student with the coloring page at the conclusion of the lesson.
2. Encourage students to think about the story's themes as they color. Consider prompts such as:
  - *What makes someone a survivor?*
  - *How did Sarah show strength?*
  - *How do you think Sarah's story gives hope to others?*

3. While students are engaged in the coloring activity, intentionally observe their behaviors, discussions, and emotional cues. This can provide valuable information about their understanding of the lesson's themes and their emotional processing of the content.
4. After the activity, create an opportunity for students to share their coloring pages and discuss their reaction to the story. This not only reinforces their learning but also allows you to assess their comprehension and personal connections to the material.
5. Take notes on students' responses and engagement levels during both the activity and the sharing session. These observations can inform future instruction and identify areas where students may need additional support.
6. Once students finish coloring, they should turn the page over and complete the activity appropriate to their level.
  - Option 1: **Kindergarten** (Pre-Writers & Early Writers)
    - Goal: Use drawing and oral expression to assess understanding.
    - Prompt: Draw a picture of someone being brave or kind, like Sarah.
    - Teacher Action: Visit each student, asking them:
      1. *Tell me about your picture.*
      2. *What do you remember about Sarah's story?*
    - Assessment: Use the rubric below to gauge understanding. Listen for mentions of kindness, gratitude, or remembrance that link to the story.
    - Alternative: Use sentence stems for guided dictation or copying:
      1. *Sarah was strong because she \_\_\_\_\_.*
  - Option 2: **Grade 1**
    - Goal: Assess understanding through drawing and written sentence development.
    - Prompt: Draw a picture that shows something Sarah did that was brave. Then write one sentence about it.
    - Teacher Action: Offer a word bank (e.g., *brave, strong, remember, story, help*) and optional sentence starters:
      1. *Sarah was strong because...*
      2. *I can be like Sarah by...*
    - Assessment: Look for an accurate reference to Sarah's experience (comprehension), a clear or developing sentence (expression), and a basic connection to a key theme like kindness, gratitude, or remembrance (connection to theme).
  - Option 3: **Grade 2**
    - Goal: Assess comprehension and emotional reflection through independent writing.
    - Prompt: On the back of your coloring page, write 1–2 sentences about what you learned from Sarah's story.
    - Teacher Action: Encourage students to reread their sentence(s) aloud or share with a partner. If needed, prompt with a guiding question such as,

*"What did Sarah's story help you understand about kindness or remembering the past?"*

- Assessment: Look for clear writing, a direct reference to Sarah's experience (comprehension), and a meaningful connection to a key theme such as kindness, gratitude, or the importance of remembering the past (connection to theme).

#### Formative Assessment Rubric: Holocaust Lesson Wrap-Up

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>3 – Proficient</b>	<b>2 – Developing</b>	<b>1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Comprehension</b>	<i>Student clearly shows understanding of Sarah's story (e.g., identifies her as a Holocaust survivor, references something she experienced, or explains why her story is important).</i>	<i>Student shows partial understanding (e.g., makes a general reference to kindness, gratitude, or remembering the past, but without clearly connecting it to Sarah's specific experience).</i>	<i>Student shows little or no understanding of the story; response may be off-topic, vague, or unrelated.</i>
<b>Expression</b>	<i>Student clearly communicates ideas through drawing, speaking, or writing (e.g., full sentences, detailed explanation, or purposeful artwork).</i>	<i>Student communicates with some support, using single words or short, unclear phrases.</i>	<i>Student is unable to express an idea or response, or response is unrelated.</i>
<b>Connection to Theme</b>	<i>Student meaningfully connects the story to a core theme such as kindness, gratitude, or the importance of remembering the past, or applies one of those ideas to their own life.</i>	<i>Student makes a general or surface-level connection, but lacks clarity or does not clearly link the response to kindness, gratitude, or remembrance.</i>	<i>Student does not make a connection to any core theme, or response is vague or unrelated.</i>

#### Optional Extension Activities:

1. Encourage students to assemble a personal *Memory Box* containing items such as a favorite toy, family photograph, or other meaningful trinkets.
2. Visit the Yad Vashem website ([click here](#)) for further information and lessons on the Holocaust. The center offers age-appropriate lesson plans and activities designed to

teach young students in a gentle and safe way. These materials align with pedagogical approaches that emphasize personal stories and emotional engagement.

3. Invite students to write a thank-you letter to a special community member, volunteer, or Holocaust survivor.
4. If feasible, arrange for a local Holocaust survivor, child of a survivor, or educator to speak with the class. Hearing firsthand accounts can provide powerful insights and reinforce the lessons learned from Sarah's story.

### **Don't have time for the complete lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 mins.)**

If you don't have time for the full lesson, consider this gentle introduction to the topic:

Show the video *Otto's Tales: Let's Meet a Volunteer: Honoring Holocaust Survivors* in its entirety without interruption. Afterward, invite students to share what they learned from the story and how it made them feel. Then distribute the coloring page as a quiet reflection activity.

As students color, ask:

- *What does it mean to be strong or brave during hard times?*
- *Why is it important to listen to stories from the past?*

This simplified activity preserves the lesson's emotional anchor while making it manageable for shorter time blocks.