

“The Two Deaths” Part I

(Mark De La Rosa)

What: A conversation starter to use with students to explain why we study/learn about the Holocaust

1. Explain to the students that the rabbis describe each of us as having two deaths.
2. The first death is the death of our physical bodies. This brings grief and sadness for our families and friends left to mourn the loss of loved ones.
3. Yet, the second death is the far more tragic loss.

To explain the second death idea, give the students the following instructions:

1. Pair up with another student sitting next to you. (This can be skipped when doing this with teachers. For students, it is teaching them how to talk to one another).
2. In a few seconds, tell them one thing that you enjoy doing. When you are finished, thank them for telling you and then be quiet. (Again, you are teaching proper discussion technique)
For this next session, decide the number of minutes you want to give for each part. I tried to give 2-3 minutes for teacher participants. For students, you may want to give a few more.
3. Next, tell your partner something about your parents. When you are finished, thank them for telling you and then be quiet.
4. Next, tell your partner something about your grandparents. When you are finished, thank them for telling you and then be quiet.
5. Finally, tell your partner something about your great grandparents. When you are finished, thank them for telling you and then sit down.

** Some students may say that they don't know anything about their grandparents or great grandparents.

This is a demonstration of the second death—Being forgotten by your family and friends. It is very sad because those family members and their histories are not known anymore.

Instruct students as they work today that in studying the Holocaust, we will be looking at stories about human beings who lived. The events that lead to many of the deaths will not be forgotten, nor will they.

This is part of the reason we study the Holocaust: to remember always those who died and have no one to remember them.

For specific programs:

Propaganda and Anti-Semitism take away from people—from their sense of community. They destroy rather than build up.

“The Two Deaths” Part II

1. Put students into groups of four to five.
2. Give them the set of photos.
3. Have them select 8 to 10 that represent the Holocaust for them. They should put their photos on a piece of posterboard. They should be able to explain why they chose the photos they did.
4. Display the posters of photos around the classroom.
5. Once the teacher finishes the Holocaust unit, have the students get back into those same groups. Have them look at their poster as well as the other photos they did not choose (that are representative of the Holocaust).
6. Ask them to either keep the photos they did, or if they desire, make changes. They should then display their group posters and explain why they did not make any changes, or if they did change some pictures, why they changed what they did.
7. This could also be a writing activity to allow them to reflect on the images selected, their reasons for choosing/changing, etc.