

Lesson 1

The Ideal of “Never Again”

Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the concept of “never again” and the international commitment to prevent genocide following World War II. Students listen to and discuss a contemporary song by a Jewish hip-hop artist in order to explore the ideal of “never again” as a response to the Holocaust and the meaning that this ideal holds for Jewish people and the broader world community. Students brainstorm steps that have been taken since World War II as well as things that they can do today to prevent another genocide. The lesson concludes by asking students to reflect on whether or not the ideal of “never again” has been achieved, and if they think that mass slaughter or the extermination of a group of people has occurred since the Holocaust.

Objectives

- Students will explore the concept of “never again” as a response to the Holocaust.
- Students will use contemporary music as a vehicle for learning about the Holocaust and steps taken by the international community to prevent genocide since World War II.
- Students will reflect on actions that they can take as individuals to prevent future genocides.

Age Range

Grades 10–12

Time

45 minutes or 1 class period

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Overview of the Holocaust: 1933–1945](#) (for teacher only)
- [“Never Again” Lyrics](#) (one for each student or post for class viewing)
- [Remedy: Giving “Never Again” a Hip-Hop Vibe](#) (one for each student)

Other Material:

- [“Never Again” audio/video](#) (optional)
- Internet access and speakers (optional)
- Chart paper, markers

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Prior to conducting this lesson, read the [Overview of the Holocaust: 1933–1945](#) in preparation of class discussions and to answer any questions students may have.

Techniques and Skills

analyzing music, brainstorming, connecting past to present, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, reading skill

Key Words

Annihilation
Antisemitism
Auschwitz
Bear witness
Ghetto
Heritage
Holocaust
Identity
Liquidation
Mass extermination
Nazi
Oppressed

Procedures

Part I (25 minutes)

1. Post or distribute the [lyrics](#) to the song, “Never Again,” by Jewish hip-hop artist, Remedy. If possible, [play the song](#) for students. Discuss some of the following questions:
 - What historical event is the subject of this song?
 - What is the Holocaust?
 - What happened to Jewish people in Europe during the Holocaust?
 - What other groups of people were impacted by the Holocaust?

NOTE: The Holocaust is defined as the murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Sinti-Roma, Poles, people with physical and mental disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents were also targeted by the Nazis.

2. Make sure to answer students’ questions about the song and clarify references that may be unfamiliar to them, including the following lines:
 - 6 million died for what?
 - Moving targets who walk with the star in their sleeve/Forever marked with a number, tattooed to your body
 - I can’t express the pain/That was felt on the train/To Auschwitz
 - Mass extermination/Total annihilation/Shipped into the ghetto and prepared for liquidation
 - Flashbacks of family then sent to the showers
3. Ask students to think about the song’s title and the refrain (“Never again shall we march like sheep to the slaughter...”) and pose the following questions:
 - Why do you think Remedy titled the song “Never Again”?
 - Have you ever heard this term used in reference to the Holocaust?
 - What do you think it signifies for Jewish people? All people?
 - How did it happen that 6 million Jews perished in the Holocaust before the world intervened to stop it?
4. Make sure students understand that following the Holocaust the Jewish people and much of the world community vowed to take action so that such atrocities might *never again* be waged against any group of people.

Part II (20 minutes)

1. Distribute the handout, [Remedy: Giving “Never Again” a Hip-Hop Vibe](#), which provides biographical information about the artist and discusses the way in which he has expressed his Jewish identity through his music. Divide students into pairs or small groups. Instruct students to spend about 10 minutes reading the handout and discussing ways in which Remedy has used his music to further the ideal of *never again*.
2. Reconvene the whole class and allow students to share some of their thoughts regarding the reading. Ask students for examples of actions that other people (or groups, governments, etc.) have taken since World War II to ensure that another Holocaust never takes place. List their responses on a sheet of chart paper. (Examples might include education, commemoration, documentation, legislation, lobbying, protests, tribunals, military intervention, economic sanctions, monitoring, mediation, peacekeeping, media awareness, etc.)
3. Ask students if there are things that they can personally do to make *never again* a reality, and record these responses as well. (Examples might include reading/educating oneself, educating others, speaking out against small and large acts of prejudice and hatred, getting involved in community/political activism, writing letters to politicians and other authorities, etc.)

4. Conclude the lesson by telling students that throughout this unit they will be learning about some important ways that the world has said never again to another Holocaust as well as some of the events that have frustrated the realization of this ideal. For the next class, ask students whether they believe that the ideal of *never again* has been achieved, and if they think that mass slaughter or the extermination of a group of people has occurred since the Holocaust. (Don't discuss this question yet, just ask students to reflect on it).

“Never Again” Lyrics

A rap song performed by Remedy ( [Listen](#))

[man praying in Hebrew during intro]

[Intro]

Feel this,
To all those races, colors, and creeds, every man bleeds for the
countless victims and all their families of
the murdered, tortured and slaved, raped, robbed and persecuted
Never Again, To the men, women, and children.
Who died in their struggle to survive, never to be forgotten.
Reuven Ben Menachum yo.

[Verse 1]

Yo my own blood, dragged through the mud
Perished in my heart still cherished and loved
Stripped of our pride, everything we lived for
Families cried, there's no where to run to, no where to hide
Tossed to the side, Access denied
6 million died for what? Yo a man shot dead in his back
Helpless women and children under constant attack
For no reason, till the next season, and we still bleeding
Yo it's freezing, And men burn in hell, some for squeezing
No hope for a remedy, nothing to believe
Moving targets who walk with the star in their sleeve
Forever marked wit a number, tattooed to your body
Late night, eyes closed, clutched to my shotty
Having visions, flashes of death camps and prisons, no provisions
Deceived by the devils decisions, forced into a slave
Death before dishonour for those men who were brave
Shot and sent to their grave, can't awaken, it's too late
Everything's been taken, I'm shaken, family, history, the making

[Chorus: Remedy w/ Israel's anthem]

Never again shall we march like sheep to the slaughter
Never again shall we sit and take orders
Stripped of our culture, robbed of our name
Raped of our freedom and thrown into the flames
Forced from our families, taken from our homes
Moved from our God then burned of our bones
Never again, never again, shall we march like sheep to the slaughter
Never again, leave our sons and daughters, stripped of our culture
Robbed of our name
Raped of our freedom and thrown into the flames
Forced from our families, taken from our homes
Moved from our God and everything we own

[Verse 2]

Some fled through the rumors of wars
But most left were dead, few escaped to the shores
With just one loaf of bread, banished, hold in for questioning

And vanished, Never to be seen again, I can't express the pain
That was felt in the train to Auschwitz, tears poured down like rain
Naked face to face, with the master race, Hatred blood and David
My heart belongs to God and stay sacred
Rabbi's and priests, Disabled individuals
The poor, the scholars all labeled common criminals
Mass extermination, total annihilation
Shipped into the ghetto and prepared for liquidation
Tortured and starved, innocent experiments
Stripped down and carved up or gassed to death
The last hour, I smelled the flowers
Flashbacks of family then sent to the showers
Powerless undressed, women with babies clumped tight to their chest
Crying, who would've guessed—dying, another life lost
Count the cost, another body gas burned and tossed in the holocaust

[Chorus]

[Outro]

Never Again, Never Again
The final solution is now retribution
Remedy, Wu-Tang.

[man praying in Hebrew]

Shema yisrael ad-onhai elo-hainu ad-onai echod
["Hear Oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One"]

[GUNSHOT]

Music and lyrics © Remedy and used with permission from *The Swarm* Vol. 1 (Wu-Tang Killa Bees, 1998).

Remedy: Giving “Never Again” a Hip-Hop Vibe

Born Ross Filler in Staten Island, New York, Remedy grew up in a Conservative Jewish family where “we observed, but we didn’t get too crazy.”¹ He has fond memories of Passover at his Aunt Hannah’s, where he “used to love looking for the matzah”² and often tried to slip away from the table in order to avoid reading from the *Haggadah* (a text read during the Passover *seder* or dinner recounting the biblical story of the Exodus).

Despite the anti-Semitism that he experienced growing up, Remedy learned to embrace his Jewish identity. “When I was young and going to school,” Remedy recalls, “knowing I was a Jew-I always felt a little bit leery. Kids would call me Jew, kike, penny-pincher. Now, I’m proud of being a Jew. To be a Jew is good.”³

As an artist, Remedy has made a conscious choice to learn more about his Jewish heritage and to celebrate his identity through music. Through reading about Jewish history, Remedy became fascinated with the Holocaust. “I read and I read,” Remedy once commented. “I watched every movie I could find about it. I couldn’t believe this actually went on and that it happened only a little more than 50 years ago. I couldn’t understand why it happened.”⁴

Remedy learned from his 95-year-old grandmother that members of his own family had perished in the Holocaust. “I was just buggin’ you know?,” Remedy remarked upon his discovery. “I found out my great-uncle was shot in the back and a lot of my family was taken to camps, never to be seen again...Others I know went through the camps still got their wrists numbered. Some of my family made it out, over here to the States, and ran around, slaving, just trying to put food in their mouths.”⁵

Remedy’s discovery of the horrors his family faced led him to write the song, “Never Again,” both as a means to express his personal feelings and a way to ensure that future generations remember the Holocaust long after its survivors are able to bear witness.

“It’s drastic. My blood went through this. I’m gonna let people know, that’s part of me right there...The sad thing is that, soon, everyone who survived won’t be around anymore. There’ll only be people like me carrying on the message. See, they didn’t have Holocaust education when I went to high school. And from the looks of things, what they have now isn’t working. You need a guy like me to reach the kids. Kids learn faster through music than by you sitting there and talking to ‘em.”⁶

“Never Again” begins with the sounds of Jewish men praying—taken from the score of the film, *Schindler’s List*—and includes samples of the Israeli national anthem, Hatikvah. The refrain includes the powerful lyrics, “Never again shall we march like sheep to the slaughter / Never again shall we sit and take orders / Stripped of our culture / Robbed of our name / Raped of our freedom and thrown into the flames / Forced from our families, taken from our homes / Moved from our God then burned of our bones.” “I cried with every line I wrote,”⁷ Remedy recalls.

“Never Again” was first released on the Wu-Tang Clan CD, *The Swarm* in 1998. The members of the Wu embraced Remedy’s Jewish identity. “Hip-hop is the voice of the oppressed,” observes Cappadonna, a member of the group. “The Jews suffered, they’ve been through it like the blacks.”⁸

For Remedy, “Never Again” captures the essence of what being a Jewish rapper is about. “If you’re not expressing yourself and your Judaism and your love for your people through your music,” he says, “then you’re really not representing who you are...I also don’t support Jewish rap that mocks Judaism and being Jewish. It’s nothing to joke about or laugh at. I don’t support mocking our own people. I love my people.”⁹

Remedy has performed “Never Again” throughout the world—including Israel and Germany and across the United States for Holocaust survivors and students in Jewish schools. He regularly tours college campuses, where he works with Hillel and pro-Israel groups to combat anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment. “I’m here to spread the word-humanity,” he tells audiences. “I happen to be Jewish, but I represent humanity.”¹⁰

Remedy also decided to release his last album in Israel rather than the U.S. “The album will still be available here,” he says. “But I wanted it to be an Israeli hip-hop album to show that there’s such a thing as Jewish hip-hop that’s loud and proud.”¹¹

ENDNOTES

¹ Aleza Goldsmith, “Jewish Rapper Takes Chai Road Here ‘to Spread Word,’” *Jewish Bulletin of Northern California*, December 1, 2001.

² Ibid.

³ “Remedy ‘Jew-Tang Clan,’” *Tattoo Jew Magazine*, http://members.tripod.com/irish_mac/artical2.html

⁴ Liel Leibovitz, “The Wu Jew,” *The Jewish Week*, December 10, 2004.

⁵ See note 3 above.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See note 4 above.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See note 1 above.

¹¹ See note 4 above.