

A Model for the Study of History

The study of history should always revolve around three basic questions. They are as follows:

- **What happened?** Although this is the most basic of questions, if it is not accurately answered, no authentic learning can occur. In the study of history, some time must be spent simply finding out about the events that occurred and the people who were involved. Unfortunately, history is sometimes studied and evaluated as if this is the only question to be answered. It is not.
- **Why is this important?** Students begin to use their higher level thinking skills when they evaluate the importance of historical figures, events, and developments. Any particular history may be considered important if it had a substantive impact on future events or if it is related to the core concepts of our identity as a society (e.g., if it is relevant to our principles and values). By these standards, the events of the Holocaust certainly were (and are) important. Evaluating the importance of history is still not the end of the process, though. The most important question remains.
- **Now that I know this, how should I respond?** Students should always complete the study of any history by seeking to draw conclusions of a personal nature. What should I do? Which attitudes should I embrace and which should I reject? What conclusions can I draw about myself and about my neighbors and my relationship to them? These questions are of extreme importance when it comes to studying about the Holocaust. In fact, they are one of the primary reasons for Holocaust education. This brings us to the subject of evaluating student progress.

Student Assessment

It is suggested that evaluation of student progress in this Holocaust study program take two forms. Students should keep a portfolio of assignments and projects to reflect their class work. Elements of this portfolio (such as art works and poetry) may even form the basis for a student museum or "Parents Night" display. Students should also keep a daily journal containing a personal response to the significant issues raised in the lesson. Specific prompts for the journal may be used, but it is often better to allow students the latitude to respond as they see fit. The third question of the history model is a good guide. "Now that I know this, what should I do?" If students can respond in a constructive and responsible way to this question, they will have engaged the subject of the Holocaust successfully.