

Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story

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HOPE

Seeking a Better Life

Europe/Latin America/Canada Strand

Objectives

The students will be able to:

- interpret the statement “One person’s courage can give hope to many.”
- participate in a group discussion.
- apply a situation from the story to a situation in their own lives.
- use reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts.
- use listening and speaking strategies for a variety of purposes.

Summary

A Japanese diplomat risks his life and the lives of his wife and children to write visas for 10,000 Jewish men, women, and children who are fleeing persecution and possible death in Lithuania in 1940. Key issues include heroism, conflicts between following rules and doing the right thing, and the importance of hope in dark times.

Vocabulary

Hanukkah
diplomat
visas
fountain pen
refugees
telegraph
cable
translate
Soviets

Mapwork

Lithuania
Japan
Russia
Poland
Germany (Berlin)
Israel

History Connections

World War II
Holocaust
refugees

Read and Think

Reading Time: 13 Minutes, 4 Minutes
Afterword

Guide to T.R.U.E. Choices

- Review **Vocabulary**, **Mapwork**, and **History Connections**.
- Read story aloud while students take notes on Side A of **Key Concepts** worksheets. Put students in small groups to answer **Key Questions** on Side B, followed by class discussion.
- Use **Journal Writing** for individual reflection in class or at home.
- Use **Optional Activities** to extend lessons through social studies, language arts, art, and applications of the attributes.
- Broaden and deepen learning with **Conflict Resolution** activities and **Conflict Resolution Skill Builders**, whole class **Action Plans**, and exploration of **Resources**.

Focus

One person’s courage can give hope to many.

Key Concepts

Hope
Heroism
Civil disobedience

Key Questions

- What choices did Chiune Sugihara have in making the decision to help the refugees? What were the risks and benefits of each choice?
- What do the actions of Japan toward Sugihara reveal about the Japanese government of the 1940s? What does the story imply about the German government in what was to become World War II?
- What were the refugees’ feelings, both positive and negative, as they waited for visas? What were Sugihara and his family feeling as they raced against time?

Journal Writing

- When have you had to make a decision that took courage or made a big impact on other people? What role did hope play in your decision?
- What individual’s actions have given hope to you or your family? What qualities of that person make him or her a hero to you? How does that person bring hope to others?

Conflict Resolution

Objective

The students will be able to identify resources for clarifying decisions.

Activity

1. We all have internal conflicts when we are not sure what to do and we need to make a decision. To help us get clear about what we should do, we weigh the risks and benefits and gather viewpoints from outside sources, such as people, groups, religions, or ethical principles. At the turning point of *Passage to Freedom*, Sugihara made a decision about whether to help the refugees. With a partner or group, have students fill in the **Conflict Resolution Skill Builder** with words and/or drawings to show sources of information Sugihara gathered before making his decision.
2. Have students complete Side B individually, thinking about a hard decision they have made in the past or need to make in the future. If they haven’t yet reached a decision, leave the last boxes blank until later.
3. Ask for volunteers to share how gathering information gave them insight into a decision.

Optional Activities for *Passage to Freedom*

For individuals, small groups, or class

The students will be able to:

1. Write a compare/contrast essay.

Compare and contrast Sugihara with a conductor or host family on the Underground Railroad.

2. Prepare and share a presentation.

Choose one of the family members and think about his or her role in the family meeting that helped Sugihara reach his decision. Present a testimonial, including his or her feelings, what he or she wanted Sugihara to do, and why. Optional: In a group of 5-6 students, take roles and reenact the family meeting.

3. Write a persuasive essay.

Read the Afterword by Hiroki Sugihara. Imagine the year is 1990. Write a letter to the government of Japan to persuade them to erect a monument honoring Chiune Sugihara. Include an introduction that focuses on Sugihara's character and accomplishments and clearly states the need for a monument; evidence and examples from the book and your own research as to how Sugihara gave hope to thousands of Jews fleeing the Nazis; and a conclusion that summarizes your arguments for the creation of the monument.

4. Design a monument.

Create a monument that honors Sugihara. Explain how your design expresses the idea of one person's courage giving hope to many.

5. Use print and electronic resources to research information about the world situation in 1940 and create a display to share the findings.

You have been asked to design a display for the Visitor's Center to be built at the base of the monument (see Activity 3). Visitors would learn the story of Chiune Sugihara before going to view the monument that honors him. What should the visitors know about the world situation in 1940? Research online to find out what was going on in Europe, Asia, and the U.S. in 1940. What should the visitors know about Mr. Sugihara?

6. Label given countries on a map and trace a route.

On a map of the world, label Lithuania, Japan, Russia, Poland, Germany (Berlin), and Israel. Trace the route taken by the Sugihara family in red and the route taken by the Jewish refugees in blue.

7. Research requirements and procedures for obtaining passports and visas.

Find out how to get a passport (or get one). Report to your class on costs and requirements. Why is it good to have a passport? Find out which countries require visas.

8. Write an informational essay.

Albert Einstein once said, "Never do anything against conscience even if the state demands it." What is civil disobedience and when is it necessary? What did Sugihara do that would be considered civil disobedience? Write about another time in history when people chose to disobey a law or government.

9. Use print and electronic resources to identify heroes and report on their contributions.

Find out about other diplomats and heroes who saved Jewish refugees by giving them visas or other types of assistance before and during World War II.

Extension: Action Plan

Whole class

Action Plan

The students will be able to work as a group to orchestrate a plan to honor a community leader.

Identify a hero who has given hope to people in your community and make a plan to honor him or her.

Resources

Books

Fighting For Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II by Michael L. Cooper (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

Using first-person testimony Cooper captures the dichotomy of the U.S. government's attitude toward Japanese Americans during World War II. His description of life in the camps is vivid, and the battlefield accounts are graphic and dramatic.

Films

Sugihara: Conspiracy of Kindness by Robert Kirk and Diane Estelle Vicari. A co-production of Dentsu Inc., in association with David Rubinson and CPG LLC.

A 90-minute historical documentary that tells the remarkable story of Chiune Sugihara and the Jewish refugees he helped to save. Available from WGBH Public Television Station. <http://shop.wgbh.org>. Search for title.

Websites

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Web address takes visitors to the Holocaust Encyclopedia. Search using term 'Sugihara' for photos and articles about Chiune Sugihara.

Key Words:

Holocaust – Lithuania – Jewish – Japan

For additional resources, please visit www.heartwoodethics.org and choose Middle Grades under Teaching Heartwood.