***Holocaust Literature***

**Three major areas of concern**

**1. Choose only age appropriate material -** know your students

**2. The importance of looking at works on the Holocaust in regard to their literary and historical value**

\* Any historical literature needs to be evaluated both as history and literature. A book cannot be fully recommended unless it is good history as well as good literature.

\* It is so difficult to find a work of literature that can come close to conveying the enormous scope and magnitude of this event.

**3. The second is the necessity of achieving a balance between books that either avoid confronting the horrors of the Holocaust or that overwhelm the reader with accounts of atrocity.**

\* Like *The Diary of Anne Frank,* much Holocaust literature for young people, is written from a child’s point of view. These children neither knew nor understood what was going on around them; they knew only what was happening in their own lives. Unless readers bring with them some historical knowledge of the events surrounding these children, they know no more that the persons or characters in the book; they have no historical context into which to place what they have read. Teachers, who assign books such as these, should do so only after some basic Holocaust history has been taught.

\* It is important that teachers discriminate, and teach students to discriminate, between war stories, Holocaust stories, and stories that just happen to be set in the same time period and geographic locations as the Holocaust.

\* Books though which are “catalogues of atrocity” tend to numb the senses, and ultimately, desensitize the reader. Thus, teachers need to be careful how they use these in the classroom as well.

**\* Teachers need to take into consideration a number of key issues prior to selecting a piece of Holocaust literature for classroom use.**

1. The work should be historically accurate, and not convey misconceptions about the history or the people involved.

2. Teachers need to evaluate the readability of the piece.

3. The work must be engaging and thought-provoking to the students.

4. Literary works should be selected that are not so long or so complex that they almost automatically result in there not being adequate time for ample discussion of the work.

5. Literary pieces that romanticize the history of the Holocaust should be avoided.

6. The literary work should present “true-to-life” characters, as opposed to caricatures or stereotypes.

7. Since many of the literary works on the Holocaust may include ghastly and horrifying images, scenes, incidents, and events, a teacher must use the soundest judgment possible when selecting and employing such works in class.

8. Literature of the Holocaust should offer sufficient stimulus for readers to draw their own conclusions and avoid didactic sermonizing.

9. The literature selected should be capable of challenging students to examine their own lives and world.

10 Works should be chosen that enlighten students and encourage further study of the Holocaust, thus helping to ensure remembrance.

**The most important prerequisite for teaching the Holocaust is that teachers of Holocaust literature must also be familiar with Holocaust history.**

**The study of the Holocaust is, or should be, a search for humanity through the study of inhumanity.**

**It must be kept in mind that no individual book can truly convey the full story of the Holocaust. What teachers need to try to do is to try to present as balanced a piece of the picture as possible, conveying the facts, demonstrating the scope and magnitude of the event, and not losing sight of the human aspect.**

**History records the events and compiles the statistics, and literature translates the events and statistics into real things happening to real people.**

**Ultimately, studying literary responses to the Holocaust can assist students to:**

1. Confront the extent of the injustices and murderous actions of the Nazis.

2. Recognize the deeds of resistance and heroism in ghettos and concentration camps.

3. Explore the spiritual resistance manifested by the various responses – including the literary – that portray the dignity of an individual or people whose spirits transcended the evil of their murderers.

4. Recognize the different roles – such as victim, oppressor, bystander, and rescuer – which were assumed or thrust upon people during the Holocaust and the choices or lack of choices that evolved.

5. Analyze the corruption of language by the Nazis; for example the use of the terms *emigration* for expulsion, *evacuation* for deportation, *deportation* for transportation to a place that often resulted in death, *aktions* for roundups that usually led to mass murder, and *Final Solution* for the systematically planned annihilation of every single Jew; and

6. Make important and unique distinctions regarding the various nuances and shades of gray concerning the actions of individuals and groups.