

CENTROPA LESSON PLAN

Coming of Age in a Time of War

1. Basic Lesson Details

Title of lesson plan:	Coming of Age in a Time of War: Comparing Personal Testimonies
School & City:	Various
Name of Teacher(s)	Elena Vikman, Kamal Abu Salha, Lucy Fried, Yonathan Baron

2. Participating Students

Number of students:	25 students and over (Your standard classroom size)
Age / Grade / Language Level:	Grades 9th-11th
Social / Cultural / Religious Background:	Various

3. Resource Pack Information

Primary Resources Used:	Avia Cohen - Coping with war in Israel after October 7 Centropa - Rifka and Elvira - Coming of Age in a Time of War
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4. Mission and Goals

What problem/challenge does the project try to solve?	To make a Holocaust story more relevant to our students' frame of reference. Also as far as language learning is concerned: to find relevant language and emotional concepts to express and cope with times of crisis.
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What is the mission of the project?	This lesson is aimed at making the Holocaust more relevant to our students. Comparing the Holocaust story to October 7th makes it closer to their experience.
What are the goals of the lesson?	1. Language Goal: Learning 8 key vocabulary words related to coming of age in a Time of War 2. Being able to discuss and write about their experiences and emotions. Writing and discussion should demonstrate correct vocabulary usage.
Applied tools & Centropa resources:	1. Centropa website- WWII Video: 'Rifka and Elvira - Coming of Age in a Time of War' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N78jf3lhCIU) 2. Biography of Rifka Volster (Centropa: https://www.centropa.org/en/biography/rifka-volster) 3. Coping with War in Israel after October 7- (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdhrbY3WEIM)

6. Expected Results and Outcomes

By the end of this comparative lesson, students will achieve the following:

- Language Acquisition: Students will accurately use 8 key vocabulary words related to coming of age in a time of war in speaking and writing.
- Students will be able to discuss and write about the topic.

CURRICULUM APPENDIX: LESSON PROCEDURE, STUDENT HANDOUTS & WORKSHEETS

Lesson Procedure

1. Warm-Up: What does it mean to come of age? (10 minutes)

Write the phrase come of age on the board. Ask students to guess its meaning. Quick discussion prompts:

- At what age do people become adults in your opinion?
- What experiences can make a young person grow up quickly?

Write students' ideas on the board. Introduce the lesson title and the two videos.

2. Vocabulary Introduction and Practice (15 minutes)

Present the 8 vocabulary items. Read each word aloud. Students repeat. Use the table above or project it.

Activity A: Match the word to the definition (handout).

Activity B: Fill in the blanks with the correct word:

1. When the siren sounded, everyone ran to the _____. (shelter)
2. Keeping a daily _____ helped life feel normal. (routine)
3. It is not easy to _____ with fear and worry. (cope with)
4. The grandmother's _____ helped us understand the past. (testimony)
5. Moving away from home caused _____ for many families. (displacement)

Activity C: Students choose 3 words and write a short sentence for each.\

Target Vocabulary

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example
come of age	to reach an age when you are considered an adult; to grow up through important experiences	The war made many young people come of age quickly.

cope with	to deal successfully with a difficult situation	Children had to cope with fear and missing friends.
resilience	the ability to become strong, happy, or successful again after something bad happens	Her resilience helped her keep going every day.
shelter	a safe place that protects you from danger; also: to protect	Families ran to the bomb shelter when they heard sirens.
routine	the usual series of things you do at a particular time	Even in war, people tried to keep some routine.
testimony	a formal statement about something you saw, experienced, or believe	The video is a testimony from someone who lived through the war.
displacement	the state of being forced to leave your home	Displacement meant leaving everything familiar behind.
generation	all the people born and living at about the same time; a group of people of similar age	Stories pass from one generation to the next.

3. Video 1: Avia Cohen - Coping with war in Israel after October 7 (15 minutes)

Before viewing: Ask students to listen for 3 things: a feeling, a place, and an action.

While viewing: Students complete a viewing guide.

A1 task	Use the A1 checklist below. Tick each item you hear or see.
A2 task	Write 1-2 sentences: What happened? How did Avia feel?
B1 task	Use the B1 checklist below. Take notes for each item.

Video 1 Listening Checklists

A1 checklist - Tick what you hear:

- The word shelter or safe place
- The word family or friends
- A feeling word (for example: afraid, sad, worried, hopeful)
- Something people do every day (a routine)

B1 checklist - Listen and take short notes:

- The main problem or challenge Avia describes
- One place she mentions and why it is important

- How she says young people cope with difficult feelings
- One message or lesson she wants to share

After viewing: Pair-share answers. Then brief whole-class discussion.

4. Video 2: Centropa - Rifka and Elvira - Coming of Age in a Time of War (15 minutes)

Before viewing: Explain that this video is a testimony from World War II. Rifka and Elvira were young girls during a very difficult time.

While viewing: Students complete a viewing guide.

A1 task	Use the A1 checklist below. Tick each item you hear or see.
A2 task	Write 1-2 sentences: Who are Rifka and Elvira? What was hard for them?
B1 task	Use the B1 checklist below. Take notes for each item.

Video 2 Listening Checklists

A1 checklist - Tick what you hear:

- The word family or home
- The word fear or afraid
- The word hope or strong
- A word about the past or a memory

B1 checklist - Listen and take short notes:

- Who Rifka and Elvira are and where they lived
- One way their daily routine changed because of the war
- How they coped with danger or displacement
- Why their testimony is important for a new generation

After viewing: Pair-share answers. Whole-class discussion.

5. Speaking Practice: Compare and Discuss (20 minutes)

Put students in mixed-level groups of 3-4. Give each group a comparison task card.

A1 card	Use the words SAME and DIFFERENT. Talk about: place, age, feeling.
A2 card	Compare Avia and Rifka/Elvira. How was their life similar? How was it different? Use 3 target words.
B1 card	Compare the two videos. Discuss: time, place, challenges, coping strategies, and message for young people today. Use at least 5 target words.

Discussion questions for all levels (teacher selects based on class readiness):

- What helped the young people in the videos keep going?

- Why do people tell their stories many years later?
- What can we learn from people who lived through war?
- How do young people in Israel today show resilience?

After group work, ask 2-3 groups to share one idea with the class.

6. Writing Task (12 minutes)

Students choose one prompt and write 5-10 sentences.

A1 prompt	Write about a time you felt afraid. Use 2 target words.
A2 prompt	Compare Avia's experience with Rifka and Elvira's experience. Use 4 target words.
B1 prompt	Write a short paragraph (80-100 words) answering: What does it mean to come of age during wartime? Use at least 5 target words and give examples from both videos.

Encourage students to use the vocabulary table. For A1 writers, provide sentence frames such as: 'I felt _____. I coped by _____.'

7. Wrap-Up and Sharing (3 minutes)

Invite 2-3 volunteers to read one sentence from their writing.

Closing reflection: 'One word I will remember from today is _____.'

Differentiation Summary

This lesson is designed for mixed A1-B1 classes. Use the leveled tasks above, and consider these additional supports:

- A1: provide word banks, sentence frames, and picture support; allow short phrases or L1 support.
- A2: provide sentence starters and a vocabulary glossary; expect simple connected sentences.
- B1: expect longer responses, comparisons, and personal opinions with fewer scaffolds.

Assessment Ideas

- Collect and review the writing task for vocabulary use and sentence structure.
- Use a simple rubric: 1 point for each target word used correctly, 1 point for clear ideas, 1 point for grammar.
- Listen during speaking practice to check pronunciation and usage of target vocabulary.

Homework Task **Choose one:**

- Interview a family member about a difficult time they remember. Write 5 sentences using 2 target words.

- Write a short letter (8-10 sentences) to a young person in another country explaining what it means to be resilient.
- Draw a picture showing 'coming of age' and write 3 sentences about it.

Video Links

[Avia Cohen - Coping with war in Israel after October 7](#)

[Centropa - Rifka and Elvira - Coming of Age in a Time of War](#)

Appendix: Student Handout - Vocabulary Match

Match each word with the correct definition.

1. come of age	a. a safe place that protects you
2. cope with	b. to grow up through important experiences
3. resilience	c. the ability to recover after something bad
4. shelter	d. to deal successfully with a difficult situation
5. routine	e. people born and living at about the same time
6. testimony	f. the usual things you do at a particular time
7. displacement	g. a statement about something you experienced
8. generation	h. being forced to leave your home

Answer key: 1-b, 2-d, 3-c, 4-a, 5-f, 6-g, 7-h, 8-e