

## Bringing History to Life

### A Centropa-Inspired Lesson Journey

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Lesson title:</b> Discovering our Super Powers: The Story of Elvira Kohn                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>School:</b>                                                                                       |
| <b>Teacher Name(s):</b> Yulia, Maya, Chen, Eti, Tammy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Subject:</b> Strengths and SuperPowers - Survival Strategies                                      |
| <b>Grade level:</b> 7th-11th Grade                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Number of students:</b> 30                                                                        |
| <b>I Can Statements:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To connect to Elvira's story on a personal level.</li> <li>- To find the students' strength in times of challenge</li> <li>- Students will be able to express themselves artistically through art.</li> <li>- Students will be able to present their project to their peers.</li> </ul> | <b>Student background</b> (social, cultural, religious, learning needs): Junior High and High School |

| Centropa Resource Information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Historical Background                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Centropa resource pack or item(s) used:</b><br/> Elvira Kohn's story<br/> film; Rifka and Elvira<br/> <a href="https://www.centropa.org/en/centropa-cinema/rifka-and-elvira-coming-age-time-war">https://www.centropa.org/en/centropa-cinema/rifka-and-elvira-coming-age-time-war</a></p> <p><b>Elvira's story:</b><br/> <a href="https://www.centropa.org/en/project/imagine/home/elvira-kohn">https://www.centropa.org/en/project/imagine/home/elvira-kohn</a></p> <p><b>Geographical context of the resource:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Croatia;</li> <li>– Key locations: Vinkovci, Dubrovnik, Kupari, Island of Rab - Kampor camp, Šenj, Otocac, Šlinj, Plitvice, Glina, Topusko, Zadar, Otocac, Karlovac, Zagreb;</li> <li>– Relevant geographical features:</li> </ul> <p><b>Other resources</b> (handouts, supplies, technology):</p> | <p><b>Time period:</b> Before, during and after WW2.</p> <p><b>Key events or developments:</b></p> <p>Born in 1914 in Sarajevo, raised in Vinkovci, and later worked as a photojournalist in Dubrovnik.</p> <p>Interned in Italian camps (Kupari and Rab), secretly documenting conditions. She escaped on Italy's surrender in 1943 to join the Yugoslav Partisans as an official photographer.</p> <p>Served as an officer and photographer for the Yugoslav military until 1974, later preserving her historical photo archives in Zagreb until her death in 2003.</p> <p><b>Connections to broader historical context:</b></p> <p>Represents interwar Yugoslav Jewish life and integration into new professional fields like photography.</p> <p>Highlights the difference between Italian and Ustaše occupation zones, as well as the active role of Jewish fighters in European partisan resistance.</p> <p>Reflects post-war socialist Yugoslav nation-building and the complex identity of Holocaust survivors within a communist state.</p> <p><b>Rationale for selecting this resource:</b></p> <p>This video captures Elvira's entire life—before, during, and after WW2. This provides a holistic view of 20th-century European Jewish life, showing how survivors rebuilt their lives and navigated post-war political systems like Yugoslav communism.</p> <p>Her story offers a rare, intersectional viewpoint. It highlights the often-overlooked history of Sephardic Jews in the Balkans, the nuances of the Italian versus Ustaše occupation zones, and the critical role of women in the armed Yugoslav Partisan resistance.</p> |

### Emotional-Social-Pedagogical Notes

**Specific student needs or circumstances to consider:**  
take into consideration students with special needs and younger students while teaching and exposing them to some of the materials attached.

**Strategies to support social-emotional learning:** considering scaffolding the lessons step by step, adding and emitting materials in order to adjust the lesson to a specific classroom. Making an effort to hence a sensitive ESL environment.

**Strengthening sense of competence and belief in ability:** students should be encouraged to find their strengths not only within themselves but also in their Jewish communities, discovering and recognizing their historical heritage.

**Developing empathy and recognizing others' needs:** explicit explanations are sometimes required especially to younger children, while discussing the power of community saving Elvira's camera, emphasizing the kindness of people who helped along the way

**Opportunities for student choice and voice: students should be encouraged to learn, think , discuss and having their own arguments about the materials, creating arts based on Elvira's story.**

| Lesson Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Homework / Additional Practice |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p><b>What is the main goal of this lesson?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To connect to Elvira's story on a personal level.</li> <li>- To find the students' strength in times of challenge</li> <li>- Students will be able to express themselves artistically through art.</li> <li>- Students will be able to present their project to their peers.</li> </ul> |                                |
| <p><b>What specific skills, knowledge or values will students gain?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- historical knowledge, Holocaust in the Balkans, Sephardi Jews, post-war Yugoslavia</li> <li>- Self-reflection, empathy, identification</li> <li>- Self-expression through arts and public speaking in English</li> </ul>                                        |                                |

| Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Reflection & Evaluation                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Formative assessments used during lesson:</b></p> <p><a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NVQKxXhao1dEjs8yz8LS_tzyDWiwPvAuiK3FeazC8Po/edit?usp=sharing">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NVQKxXhao1dEjs8yz8LS_tzyDWiwPvAuiK3FeazC8Po/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p><b>Summative assessment(s) to evaluate mastery of objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-teacher's assessment of the final products</li> <li>-optional: a school final exhibition</li> </ul> <p><b>Student self-assessment and peer assessment:</b></p> <p>Peer assessment of the groups' presentations according to the COBE rubrics</p> <p><b>Exit ticket prompt:</b></p> | <p><b>What went well?</b></p> <p><b>What changes would you make to improve the lesson?</b></p> <p><b>Analysis of exit ticket responses:</b></p> |

## Lesson Procedure

| Time   | Brief Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Mode of Interaction    |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 15 min | <p><b>PRE-WATCHING</b></p> <p>1. Imagine that your life has changed completely because of something terrible. What could help you continue living?</p> <p>Take a minute to think. Choose two things from this list: <i>family, friends, hope, religion, a goal for the future, memories, helping other people, work, love</i>. Explain why you chose these.</p> <p>2. Meet Viktor Frankl:</p> <p>Viktor Frankl was an Austrian Jewish doctor and psychiatrist. During the Holocaust, he was imprisoned in several Nazi concentration camps. He lost his wife, parents and brother. After the war, he wrote a famous book called <i>Man's Search for Meaning</i>.</p> <p>Frank believed that even when people cannot control what happens to them, they can sometimes choose how they respond to it. He also believed that having a reason to live — a person to love, a goal, a task, or something meaningful — can help people survive difficult times.</p> <p><a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/viktor_frankl_why_believe_in_others">https://www.ted.com/talks/viktor_frankl_why_believe_in_others</a></p> <p>Students answer the questions in their own words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- According to Frankl, what can help a person continue living after terrible experiences?"</li> <li>- Do you agree with Frankl? Why / why not?</li> </ul> <p>3. Today we are going to learn the story of a Holocaust survivor who lived through the war and then had to build a life after it.</p> <p>While reading, think about this question:</p> <p>What was this person's "why"? What helped them go on living? (hope, a reason to continue, a connection to other people, a sense of purpose)</p> | Group discussion       |
| 10 min | Getting to know Elvira: Students are introduced to Elvira Kohn's life through selected photographs and key moments from her story.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Teacher's presentation |
| 20 min | Exploring Elvira's strengths: Students work in groups and identify strengths Elvira showed throughout her life, such as courage, resilience, creativity, hope and determination. They support their ideas with examples from her story.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Group discussion       |
| 15 min | Creative activity: Students choose one of Elvira's strengths and connect it to their own lives. They create a short personal response: "Like Elvira, I have the power to..."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Individual / pair work |
| 10 min | Students share their ideas and discuss what they learned from Elvira about finding inner strength during difficult times                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Reflection and sharing |
|        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                        |

# ELVIRA KOHN'S STORY

## TELL HER STORY THROUGH A COMIC

**YOUR VOICE MATTERS!**

★ ☆

Watch Elvira Kohn's testimony and create a 6-frame comic based on her story. Use drawings, captions, speech bubbles, thought bubbles, sounds and emotions.

**IMPORTANT: Be respectful. Do not draw graphic violence. Focus on feelings, thoughts, memories, family and community.**

SCAN TO WATCH ELVIRA KOHN'S TESTIMONY



♥

**1 BEFORE THE WAR**

What was Elvira's life like before the war?  
Where did she live? Who was important to her?

Before the war, Elvira \_\_\_\_\_

What was important to her?

**2 A LOVE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY**

When did Elvira discover photography?  
What did she love about it?



Elvira fell in love with \_\_\_\_\_

What did photography mean to her?

"Photography was \_\_\_\_\_"

**3 THE WAR BEGINS**

What happened when the war began?  
How did it change Elvira's life?

**BOOM!**

When the war began, Elvira \_\_\_\_\_

She felt \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Add one thought bubble.

**4 RAB CAMP**

What was life like in the Rab labor camp?  
How did Elvira feel there?



In the Rab camp, Elvira \_\_\_\_\_

She felt \_\_\_\_\_

What helped her get through this time?

**5 THE PARTISANS**

What did Elvira do?  
How did she show courage?



Elvira joined the Partisans and \_\_\_\_\_

She showed courage when she \_\_\_\_\_

Choose ONE BIG WORD for this moment:

**COURAGE    HOPE    DETERMINATION    RESILIENCE**

When she joined the Partisans, Elvira felt \_\_\_\_\_

**6 AFTER THE WAR**

How did Elvira's life change after the war?  
How did she use her photography?



After the war, Elvira \_\_\_\_\_

She used her camera to \_\_\_\_\_

Elvira's story teaches us \_\_\_\_\_

Use a symbol in your drawing

 a house  
  a tree  
  a camera  
  a heart  
  a flower

**REFLECTION TIME!**

Which moment in Elvira's story affected you the most? Why?

**?**

What gave Elvira strength during difficult times?

**LISTEN. REMEMBER. CREATE.**