



Survivor: Alex Gross, Carpathian Mtns., Czechoslovakia

Camp: Auschwitz III, Bunowitz Age: 13

SUMMARY: Alex Gross grew up in Czechoslovakia and had good friends who were not Jewish. Then when the Hungarians, allies of the Germans occupied his town, in his best friend joined Hitler Youth and started beating him up and hated him. Alex ran away from home at the age of 11 to his uncle’s village. He returned home and was beaten up by his “friends” and ran away again to his mother’s village. He returned again and they were sent to a ghetto for 3-4 weeks and then was transported by train to Birkenau (Auschwitz II). He was advised to say that he was 18 even though he was only 13, but he was tall. He discovered that anyone under 18 or over 30 was sent to the gas chamber. He was tattooed a number and assigned to Auschwitz III Buno for 8 months. The average life span at Buno was 3-4 weeks. He describes “slave labor” as a horrendous way of life with the constant threat of death for breaking any rule. The Russians started approaching so the Nazis took 20,000 inmates to Gleivitz of which only 1000 survived the trip. He was then transferred to Buchenwald where life was a little better because they were fed. He found his brother Sam there and they both cried that each was still alive. After 3-4 months they started to evacuate Buchenwald. Alex was ill and couldn’t make the march. He laid down on the ground and his brother laid next to him. The guards shot at them and hit Alex in the leg and left them there to die. He laid there for 3-4 days and found his other brother there as well. “Miraculously” he saw a tank coming – realized it wasn’t German but American. From under the turret out came a black man which reassured Alex that they were Americans. They attended to his wounds. Alex was taken to Scotland as an orphan and then went on to London where he was reunited with his siblings. Not being able to get to Israel, Alex came to America and joined the army as a translator and optician, as he spoke 7 languages and had been an optician in London. He fought in the Korean War and then went to Chicago. He offers advice to his student interviewers: “If you see something, say something.”

Objectives	FL State Standards Correlations
Estimated time of the Lesson: Film 20 min. Total time: 50-55 minutes	SUBJECT: SOCIAL STUDIES Strand: SS.912.W World History
1. Students will be able to identify elements of the Holocaust by listening to the account of a survivor of the Holocaust.	Standard 1: SS.912.W1: Utilize historical inquiry skills and analytical procedures.
2. Students will identify the location of the various places that the Survivor mentions in his account.	Strand: SS.912.G: Geography Standard 2: SS.912. G.2: Understand physical and cultural characteristics of places
3. Students will recognize the suffering the survivor had to endure by being attentive to his account.	Strand: SS.912.S Sociology Standard 2: SS.912. S.2 Culture. Examining the influence on the individual and the way cultural transmission is accomplished.

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	Benchmark: SS.912.S.2.3: Recognize the influences of genetic inheritance and culture on human behavior.
4. Students will identify with the survivor's childhood age during the beginning of the onslaught of the Nazis.	
5. Students will analyze what Eli Wiesel meant when he said, "Listening to a witness, makes you a witness."	Standard 7: SS.912.S.7: Social Problems/analyze a range of social problems in today's world Benchmark: SS.912.S.7.1: Identify characteristics of a social problem, as opposed to an individual problem.
MATERIALS:	
Map of Europe that includes Czechoslovakia, Poland, Scotland & England DVD Player, screen	
SUGGESTED PROCEDURES	
1. Using a map of Europe teacher asks students to identify where Czechoslovakia might be (currently 2 nations). 2. Teacher helps students find other locations that Survivor will mention: Budapest, Prague, Gleivitz, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Scotland, London	Strand: SS.912.G: Geography Standard 1: SS.912G.1 Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations tools and technology to report information.
3. Teacher prepares students for viewing by introducing the Survivor and having the students define the term <i>Survivor</i> .	Subject: ELA Strand: LAFS.910.RI: Reading Standards for Informational Text
4. Teacher introduces vocabulary that the Survivor will use and ascertains that all students are familiar with the places and words: a. Hitler Youth b. Auschwitz I, II, III, Birkenau c. Yiddish d. Tattooing as "burned number into my arm" e. Open coal-carrying cars	Cluster 2 LAFS.910.RI.2: Craft & Structure Benchmark: LAFS.910.RI.2.4 Determine the meaning of words & phrases as they are used in a text, including figuration, connotation and technical meanings; analyze the connotation's impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
5. Teacher has students prepare to take notes during the Survivor's talk and write down questions that come to mind.	Subject Social Studies: Strand SS.912.S: Sociology Standard 2: SS.912. S.2: Culture / Examine the influence on the individual & the way cultural transmission is accomplished.
6. Students view Video of Survivor Alex Gross	
7. See attached questions specific to the video of Alex Gross	
8. Teacher asks students to pause and reflect on this presentation and write one sentence about their reaction to his account.	Subject: ELA Strand LAFS.K12.SL: Standards for Speaking & Listening

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<p>a. Teacher asks for students to share their reactions</p>	<p>Cluster 1 LAFS.K12.SL.1: Comprehension & Collaboration Benchmark – LAFS.k12.SL.1.3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning & use of evidence & rhetoric</p>
<p>9. Teacher has students write a question that they would like to ask this Survivor and submit them to the teacher for dissemination, incorporating Eli Weisel’s theme “<i>Listening to a witness, makes you a witness.</i>”</p>	<p>Subject: Social Studies Strand: SS.912.S: Sociology Standard 2: SS.912.S2 Culture / Examine the influence on the individual & the way cultural transmission is accomplished. Benchmark: SS.912.2.9 Prepare original written and oral reports and presentations on specific events, people or historical eras.</p>
<p>10. HW assignment: Teacher invites students to write a letter to the Survivor sharing how they received his story and their perspective on his survival.</p>	<p>Benchmark: SS.912.S.2.3 Recognize the influences of genetic inheritance and culture on human behavior.</p>

ADDENDUM: QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO ALEX GROSS VIDEO

1. What was the promise that Alex made to his mother in the ghetto?
 - a. That he would stay alive no matter what.
2. What was the lie he understood he had to tell the Nazis in the line-up during the selection process?
 - a. He was only 13 and was advised to say he was 18
3. How did he deal with that as he approached the guards?
 - a. He pinched his cheeks to make them redder and he stood on his toes and as tall as he could.
4. How did he stay hydrated on his open-car train ride to Buchenwald?
 - a. As they crossed under a bridge he grabbed the icicles that were hanging down.
5. What did Alex believe was miraculous as he entered Buchenwald?
 - a. He discovered his third brother was still alive.
6. What is unique about Alex’ discover of his family at the end of the war?
 - a. All of his siblings survived and were reunited.
7. What message does Alex want everyone to remember?
 - a. “Be good to each other, don’t fight don’t argue, don’t smoke, don’t drink! Be good to each other and if someone’s not good – just walk away.”



With special thanks to the