

The Teachers' Guide

To

*Hidden Letters*

Annotated by Deborah Slier and Ian Shine

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Teachers' Guide by

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## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background to *Hidden Letters*

In 1997, a workman demolishing a house in Amsterdam discovered letters hidden in the ceiling of the bathroom on the third floor. There were eighty letters, postcards and one telegram. The author of these letters was Philip (Flip) Slier (rhymes with beer), a Dutch Jew who came of age during the Holocaust and met his death at the Sobibor death camp at age nineteen. (see *Hidden Letters*, pages 150 and 152) *Hidden Letters* presents the letters that Flip wrote to his parents in Amsterdam from the Molengoot work camp in the Netherlands almost on a daily basis from April 1942 until his escape in September 1942.

*Hidden Letters* sets Flip's letters against historical documents, photographs, timelines and family memorabilia of the period. It contains lists of Flip's closest relatives and friends detailing where they lived and when and how they died. (*Hidden Letters*, pages 10, 159-161) The book thus transforms his story from being just an individual tragedy into a reflection of the social and political forces that fueled and sustained the Holocaust. Organized in this manner, *Hidden Letters* presents the reader with a compelling and personal look at the life of ordinary Dutch Jews and Dutch citizens before and during World War II. It invites discussions about the response of both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities as well as the world at large to the Nazis' planned systematic destruction of the Jewish people. The letters as well as the historical material are deeply moving. They are a testimony to the courage and resilience of average individuals and families caught up in the horror of genocide, and they give students a framework with which to combat hatred and intolerance wherever they are found.

In the introduction to *Hidden Letters*, Deborah Slier, the editor and close relative of Flip, points out how likeable, optimistic, humorous, and affectionate Flip's letters show him to be.

His work camp correspondence shows the undercurrents of hope and desperation that were a fixture of his daily existence. Flip longed for home and the companionship of family and friends. He tried to comfort his parents left in Amsterdam. He loved photography and probably would have been comfortable with today's technology.

Perhaps Flip might have sensed his letters might transcend family correspondence and become a part of the historical record of the Nazis' persecution of the Jews. He wrote his parents, "Why don't you save my letters? There's no harm in that. They know very well how the jews [*sic*] feel." Perhaps Flip was merely reassuring his parents that they would not face any danger in keeping his letters. We will never know. Unfortunately, his voice was silenced too soon. *Hidden Letters* presents us with the tools to truly say, "Never Again."

## **ORGANIZATION OF *HIDDEN LETTERS***

The core of *Hidden Letters* are the English translation of Flip's letters and his photographs. The letters are annotated with explanations of Flip's family, references to the history of the period and archival photographs and documents. In addition to a timeline of Flip's life and contemporary political events, the book also contains additional information on the Holocaust, extensive lists of Flip's family and friends and their fates -- virtually all of Flip's extended family and most of his friends were killed by the Nazis. (*Hidden Letters*, pages 159-161) There are also interviews with Holocaust survivors and the people who helped Flip, as well as the letters they and Flip's friends wrote during the war.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THIS TEACHERS' GUIDE**

Suggested grade levels: 10-12.

Students may find the organization of *Hidden Letters* to be a bit complicated. The goal of this teachers' guide is to provide you with the means to help students navigate the book and learn about Flip and the difficult times in which he lived.

This teachers' guide is divided into four sections: learning objectives; a broad discussion of the themes of *Hidden Letters* with suggested activities for each theme; detailed descriptions of the activities. We have also included selections from Flip's letters and photographs and a list of important terms and concepts.

### **A. Learning objectives of *Hidden Letters***

*Hidden Letters* is a rich resource for teachers of social studies, literature and the arts. It can be used to fulfill a large number of learning objectives. The activities that we have suggested will

enable students to

1. critically evaluate print and non-print sources of information for accuracy and objectivity
2. research topics refining their reference skills in the location, selection and presentation of information
3. put historical events in context and to utilize tools such as timelines, charts, graphs and technology to analyze and present relevant information
4. evaluate the various forms of government and compare and contrast the benefits and limitations of each
5. consider different cultural perspectives and to assess how public policy is derived from these views
6. delineate the principles of citizenship in a democracy and to foster practices that build a better community, nation and world.
7. build vocabulary and language to enhance their understanding of how the use of terms verbally and in print and non-print mediums can foster and create environments of prejudice, racism and injustice
8. read, write and perform using a variety of genres and to compare and contrast the purpose of each
9. engage in-group activities that invite problem solving, enhance student communication, tolerance and heighten their social emotional learning and development.

## **B. The Themes of *Hidden Letters***

*Hidden Letters* presents three major themes which the units of study for *Hidden Letters* are designed around. They are *Who Was Flip? Who Are You?*, *Tools of Genocide* and *Voices of Protest*. There are no firm boundaries dividing these themes. In fact, they overlap considerably. For example, the tools of genocide figure greatly in Flip's life and eventually determined his fate. As you review *Hidden Letters* and this guide, you will probably find other examples. Because of this overlap, we have listed some of the same activities under more than one theme.

*Who Was Flip? Who Are You?*

*Hidden Letters* tells the story of what happened to a young man named Flip Slier during the Holocaust. That story is the dominant theme of the book and of this teacher's guide because it reveals so much of the historical, political and social events that gave rise to the Holocaust and the courage and strong spirit with which one individual responded. Flip's story along with the

activities suggested in this teachers' guide encourage students to examine their lives in the context of historical, social and political events. They will also help students see how an informed citizenry is necessary to prevent and combat hatred and injustice.

In many ways, Flip was an ordinary teenager when the Nazis invaded Holland and began to systematically destroy Jews. Because of this, his story can serve as a way to help high school students explore the prejudices and stereotypes that they encounter in their own lives as well as examine the courage and bravery and other, perhaps less positive, ways with which people respond.

Flip Slier was born on December 4, 1923 in the Dutch capital of Amsterdam. He was seventeen years old and working as an apprentice typesetter when the Germans invaded. *Hidden Letters* says that he was "5 feet 7 3/4 inches tall, weighed 156 lbs, had black hair and gray eyes." The book describes him as a "good-natured, gregarious young man" and audacious. "He played the flute and the mandolin, liked singing and had a good sense of humor." (*Hidden Letters*, p. 25) He also had a girlfriend named Truus Sant whom his parents disapproved of because she was not Jewish.

In the spring of 1942, Flip was sent to the Molengoot work camp run by the Dutch authorities at the behest of the Nazis. While at Molengoot, Flip wrote to his family almost everyday from the time of his arrival in April 1942 to his escape in September 1942. These letters describe the changing and increasingly deteriorating conditions in the camp. They also document the changes in Flip's view of his and his family's fate -- from a guarded optimism when he first arrived in Molengoot to growing fear and desperation just before he escaped. After his escape, Flip made his way to Amsterdam where he hid until he attempted to flee Holland for Switzerland. Somehow, the Nazis learned of Flip's plans and arrested him at the train station.

He was sent first to the Dutch concentration camp Vught, a punishment camp, and then to the transit camp of Westerbork. From Westerbork to Sobibor where he died.

Flip was also an photographer, and he took many of the photos that illustrate *Hidden Letters* that give us a glimpse of Dutch Jewish life before the war and of the men who were sent to Molengoot. (Flip gave his photographs to his friend Karel van der Schaaf. Over the years Flip's photographs were mingled with others of the period, and we are not sure which ones Flip took himself.)

#### Suggested Activities:

1. Reflection Journal
2. History of Amsterdam's Jewish Community Activity
3. Anne Frank and Flip
4. Who Are You?
7. Poetry
8. Drama -- Readers' Theatre or Play
9. Scrapbooking

#### *The Tools of Genocide*

Both Flip's letters and the background material found in *Hidden Letters* describes the propaganda and insidious methods the Nazis used to turn people against the Jews, to isolate and eventually send them to concentration camps and death.

The steps to organized genocide has been described elsewhere as beginning with the denial of justice to members of the despised group, then moving on to their isolation from general society, their persecution and dehumanization, the use of violence against them and finally mass executions. Examples of the actual methods used are the creation and perpetuation of negative stereotypes in the media, laws that allow and even mandate discrimination in employment, housing and social affairs, laws that require distinctive clothing and names, and changes of place names and other institutions in an attempt to erase people's memory of the persecuted group. The activities suggested here explore how the Nazis followed these steps in Holland and how repressive regimes elsewhere have used them to persecute unwanted groups.



Finally, some activities ask students to consider how the use of stereotypes, discrimination, etc. may affect their own lives and those of their friends and family.

Suggested activities:

1. Reflection Journal
2. History of Amsterdam 's Jewish Community Activity
4. Who Are You?
5. Verifying Information: Print Resources and Non-Print Resources
6. Verifying Resources
7. Poetry
8. Drama -- Readers' Theatre or Play
10. Voices of Protest -- Resisters, Rescuers, Collaborators and Bystanders
11. Can It Happen Here? School and Local Community
12. Can It Happen Here? United States

### *Voices of Protest*

While many Dutch people collaborated with the Nazis, -- the annotations in *Hidden Letters* point out that over 20,000 Dutch citizens joined the German army and that Dutch authorities cooperated in running labor camps and arresting resisters -- many people, both Jewish and non-Jewish, did resist in ways big and small. *Hidden Letters* contains many of examples of the Dutch, including Flip's, resistance to the Nazis. These would include the many Dutch people who hid Jews, *onderduikers* as they were called (*Hidden Letters*, pp.12-13) from the Nazis at the risk to their own lives and those of their families. Flip's escape was certainly an act of resistance, but the farmers who sold or smuggled food to the men at Molengoot also engaged in acts of resistance. (e.g. *Hidden Letters*, p.154) Some of the activities suggested for this theme invite students to find other acts of collaboration and resistance and to explore the reasons why some people collaborate in oppression while others resist.

*Hidden Letters* also contains examples of those who stood by and did not actively collaborate or resist. This would include most of the general population of Holland during World War II. Some did so out of indifference, most probably out of fear. It would also include many

of the world's governments, including the United States. In 1938 delegates from thirty-two countries met in Evian, France. By that time, Hitler had enacted many severe anti-Jewish laws, i.e. the Nuremberg Laws, and Jews in Germany were desperately trying to leave. While all the delegates expressed sympathy for the plight of Germany's Jews, almost none of them expressed a willingness on the part of their governments to help the Jews. (Britain did later take in 10,000 Jewish children from Germany Austria and Czechoslovakia. (*Hidden Letters*, p. 22)) The Nazis took this lack of action as a sign that the world actually approved of their treatment of the Jews and felt encouraged to go ahead with their genocidal plans. The activities suggested below also ask students to consider whether one can ever just be a bystander to persecution and genocide wherever it occurs. Recent examples in Rwanda, Tibet and Darfur emphasize the importance and need for constant vigilance.

Suggested activities:

1. Reflection Journal
2. History of Amsterdam's Jewish Community Activity
4. Who Are You?
7. Poetry
8. Drama -- Readers' Theatre or Play
9. Scrapbooking
10. Voices of Protest -- Resisters, Rescuers, Collaborators and Bystanders
11. Can It Happen Here? School and Local Community
12. Can It Happen Here? United States

### C. Selections from Flip's Letters

April 25, 1942: "Good atmosphere, decent people. We have very little freedom." (p. 26)

April 26, 1942: "We listened to a speech in which we were told that unfortunately we would not get enough to eat. We were also warned not to protest or anything like that and what the punishments would be." (p. 27)

April 28, 1942: "Even if we don't work hard, we are exhausted. But I am not made of doll's poop, and I will get through this. ... I hear that they are still calling people up. It is really terrible. I hope that you, Pa, stay away from this rotten mess." (p. 32)

May 1, 1942: "Today we received one guilder of pocket money and our yellow stars. Don't they look beautiful. ... It was tough when I got up this morning. But chin up." (p. 36)

May 4, 1942: "Don't worry that I first wrote that you should not come. Indeed we are not criminals, but we are as good as prisoners. Don't forget that." (pp. 38-39)

May 10, 1942: "There was a man in our room who was rheumatic. He was totally stiff. And the doctor said, 'You have to work until you drop. Orders are orders.'" (p. 42)

May 23, 1942: "We worked hard this week and again earned nothing. But it will be even less in the future." (p. 45)

June 3, 1942: "Why don't you save my letters? There's no harm in that. They know very well how the jews [*sic*] feel. We are careful with that fellow at work, he won't learn anything from us." (p. 48)

June 13, 1942: "I hear the food situation in A[msterdam] is still terrible. Are jews no longer allowed to buy meat and vegetables in Christian shops? I heard something like that here." (p. 54)

June 14, 1942: "Pa, must we now hand in our bikes? I heard that again. Rather give them away, or try to park them with somebody else." (p. 55)

June 20, 1942: "I may be able to buy some bread for you for f1.- should I do that? But remember only for you, mouth shut, naturally." (p. 59)

July 8, 1942: "Yes, it would be crazy if they allowed us to quietly wait for the war to end of the war in the camps. I really think that if we were sent to Germany, the greatest terrors would be in store for us, and that is why I am glad you agree with my refusal to go." (p. 72)

July, 12, 1942: "This morning I received your letter and also learned that things in Amsterdam are in a sad shape. Men are being called up and even girls from 15 to 40. That bothers me the most. That they touch the women, and even children, that is terrible." (p.74)

July 16, 1942: "The camp is now guarded at night by 12-15 men, and four of them have large whistles. You write that there are no victims in our family yet, but from de Bruin I hear that Sal and his wife must go to G[ermany]. What does that mean?" (p. 80)

July 18, 1942: "The Christians are also getting more and more afraid. This afternoon I went again to the village to pick up photos. I also did other shopping, and then went to the barber to get a haircut. He said he was sorry, but he didn't dare cut my hair while I was wearing a sta. So I took it off and got a nice cut." (p. 83)

July 23, 1942: "Yes, Pa, I also hope soon I will hear you call me 'rotten kid.' The sooner the better. Now I finally realize how great it was to be free and well taken care of." (p.87)

July 27, 1942: "Yesterday and today more people ran away; they keep on doing it. If I run away, I think I can find shelter somewhere, but until it is really necessary I am not going to do it. Every day here is a day gained, a day nearer to the end and another day to eat well!" (p. 90)

August 4, 1942: "The head boss was here today. There is one old man who has heart trouble and varicose veins; he scrubbed the floors and then the boss said he must work whether he can or not. He has no choice. It is pathetic to watch, but that is how it goes now." (p. 97)

August 10, 1942: "Orders will be given in German. ... Probably we will not be allowed to receive any more packages with food. ... There is also a chance that incoming letters will be censored. Not outgoing ones."(p. 107)

August 15, 1942: "This is the last letter I can write that won't be censored. ... The cook spoke. There are now 1,001 rules. I will mention them one by one. The cook must not talk to the jews. ... Buying food is strictly forbidden. ... I and also you may only write a maximum 2x per week and everything will be censored." (p. 115)

August 23, 1942: "Isn't it a long time since we saw each other? It is already 18 weeks since I left. Do you remember on the platform that Saturday morning? And when will see each other again? We don't know that! But still, I am optimistic, some day there will be an end to this war, and possibly soon." (p. 125)

September 13, 1942: "Lately I see more clearly than ever that this has nothing to do with religion. I cannot help it, but that is how I feel. What is a person? What is all of life? Nothing. And still we don't want to lose it, and that is why we have to be strong and have faith. Someday we will be liberated!!! I am sure of that."

## D. List of Selected Photographs From *Hidden Letters*

### a. *Who Was Flip?*

1. Flip (Philip) Slier in August 1942 page 10
2. Flip Slier about 1940 [*top right*] page 25
3. Flip, Truus; ? name: Harry Elzas [*bottom left*] page 25
4. *Left to right*: Dick van der Schaaf; Appie (Abraham) Reis; Harry Elzas and Maupie (Michael) Vogel in 1939 page 28
5. Flip's paternal grandparents, Philip Slier and Betje Benjamin-Slier [*bottom left*] page 32
6. Flip and his workmates page 38
7. Flip is on the left and to his left is "the little house with the red roof." [*bottom right*] page 42
8. *Left to right top row*: Wim Tokkie; Arie Bakker; Flip; Stella Aluin; Lena van Bienen; *middle row*: Fia Brockman; Henny de Lange; *bottom row*: Truus Sant; Jerry Kaas; Bep de Vries [*bottom*] page 48
9. Flip's friends, Lena van Bienen (right) and Jerry Kass (left) were members of the AJC page 58
10. Dick van der Schaaf and Flip [*top right*] page 61
11. Sitting on the left with a shovel is Simon Loonstijn; on his left is Kiek van Kleef. Sitting in front with a shovel is Nico Groen; on his left is Flip. The name of the other man is not known. page 70
12. Flip and his friend inside are probably laughing at the little joke on the sign they have taped to the barrack window that reads:  
VILLA EETLUST (APPETITE VILLA) page 73
13. *From top to bottom*: Dick van der Schaaf; Henny de Lange; Flip; Lena (Lea) van Bienen; Appie (Abraham) Reis; Bep de Vries; Harry Elzas; Jerry Kaas; and Maupie (Maurits) Vogel in 1941 page 91
14. Flip looking like the "Dutch picture of health" page 108

15. Flip's parents [*top*] page 116
16. Flip as a toddler on his first birthday in 1924 [*middle*] page 116
17. Flip at five years of age [*bottom*] page 116
18. Survivors. Flip's immediate family comprised 58 relatives who were alive in the Netherlands during World War II . Only six of them are known to have survived (10 percent). page 158
- b. *Tools Of Genocide*
1. Book burning was staged in Munich and several German cities. page 14  
[*top left*]
2. The first major arrest of Dutch Jews was in retaliation for the death of a Dutch Nazi. The Germans randomly arrested 425 Jewish men between the ages of 16 and 40. The men were beaten and 390 were sent to Buchenwald; from there 389 were sent to Mauthausen and killed. page 17  
[*top right*]
3. "Wednesday, February 25, 1941. The notorious Green Police closed off Apollo Lane in Amsterdam, dragged a number of Jews living on this avenue out their dwellings and carried them off to an unknown destination. Unsuspecting pedestrians who wanted to enter Apollo Lane were met with a roaring: "Bist du Jude?" (Are you a Jew?). Those who answered in the affirmative were referred to the police van. It was appalling." page 17  
[*bottom right*]
4. Men dragging cut stone at Mauthausen, where the life expectancy of a prisoner was four months. [*Top right*] page 19
5. Stairway of death, Mauthausen quarry page 24
6. Workers with their barrows. *Left to right: ? name; Flip; Nico Groen; ???* page 29
7. By May 3, 1942 all Dutch Jews over the age of six were required to wear the Yellow Jewish Star at all times. [*bottom right*] page 36
8. The sign reads Renkum Municipality [near Arnhem] Warning notice restricted for Jews. [*top*] page 54
9. On the road to Doorn near Utrecht:  
MUNICIPALITY OF DOORN JEWS NOT WANTED [*middle*] page 54

10. “The Jewish District” in Amsterdam was clearly marked. It differed from other German-established ghettos in that the entrance did not have armed guards. The sign reads: “Jewish canal.” [*bottom left*] page 54
11. As early as September 1940, Jews were banned from shopping in certain markets, stores and many streets. The sign in the butcher shop says, “ No entry for Jews.” page 55
13. “Jews not wanted” page 55
14. Jews who have been arrested being transported on Amsterdam city trams, which are guarded by German soldiers, to an assembly point on the first step to deportation. This was quite unusual, as normally the Jews were transported from the Hollandsche Schouwburg( the theater that was used as a collection post) to the Central Station on city trams after midnight, out of sight on the general population. page 68
15. A travel permit issued to a 43-year-old man. (Since April 1941, Jews had not been allowed to travel except with a special permit.) [*Bottom left*] page 73
16. Loading a transport at Westerbork. page 81
17. The Germans were so intent on eradicating Jews and Jewish culture from Dutch society that they even Aryanized Jewish Street names. Lazarus Lane is being renamed Leprozen (Leprosy) Lane. Street named after Spinoza became Andriesz Street. [*top right*] page 93
18. Jewish homes being emptied by A. Puls, a Dutch company, who like later-day locusts, gutted 10,000 apartments in Amsterdam. As a result of their looting, a new word was added to the Dutch language: “*pulsen*” -- to steal. [*bottom left*] page 93
19. Walking to an assembly point page 120
20. Families awaiting transport to Westerbork page 148

c. *VOICES OF PROTEST*

1. Perforated sheets of these stickers were dropped on the Netherlands on the night of March 25, 1941. They were intended as moral boosters for the Dutch. page 18

2. Statue “De Dokwerker” by Mari Andriessen, on Jonas Daniel Meijerplein in Amsterdam, commemorating the 1941 dock workers’ strike page 20
3. Aaltje Seinen Veurink, whose farm abutted the camp. The Veurinks invited the boys to their home in the evening, supplied them with food and listened to the radio with them. [*top left*] page 74
4. Dr. Janusz Korczak with some of his children from his orphanage in 1938 who persuaded the Germans to take him too page 75
5. *From right to left*: a visitor, Mrs. Aaltje Veurink, Rick; *onderduiker* and son. The *onderduiker*’s husband had been a fisherman, but refused to fish for the Germans. [*bottom*] page 89
6. Edith Stein page 95
7. Karel van der Schaaf and Wiebe van der Pol, a farm, laborer, on the Baron farm in Friesland where Karel was hiding in 1943 [*top right*] page 97
8. The Baron farm in Drachten [*bottom left*] page 97
9. Cato (Tootje) Loonstijn (Simon Loonstijn’s sister). Tootje was 15 when she received a summons to report to “work in Germany.” She refused to go. The Vrijlink (pronounced Vraylink) family helped Tootje find her first hiding place. page 98
10. Rescue from the Schouwurg 1. Walter Suskind 2. Henriette Pimentel [*top and middle right*] page 111
11. *From left*: Sina Vrijlink; Flip; Seine Vrijlink; and local farmers, Jan and Geert Klein page 113
12. Two local farmers’ daughters in 1946: Miena (Hermina) Vrijlink (right) and her friend Rich Veurink (left) who put food under the wheelbarrows every day for the boys at Molengoot [*middle right*] page 123
13. Gees went to Amsterdam with her father Jan Vrijlink [*in photo*] to explore ways in which they might help Flip and Simon. page 125
14. *From left to right*: Vrijlinks, Seine, Gerridina, Sina, Johanna and Gees; and Simon Loonstijn [*bottom left*] page 138
15. Minke Honij, who hid Arthur Philips [*middle*] page 187



## **E. Vocabulary and concepts useful in the study of Hidden Letters and the related topics of racism, prejudice and injustice**

Anti-Semitism  
Bigotry  
Civil Rights  
Concentration Camps  
Death Camps  
Demagogue  
Discrimination  
Disinformation  
Ethnic Cleansing  
Ethnocentrism  
Euthanasia  
Genocide  
Gestapo  
Ghetto  
Hate Crime  
The Holocaust  
Jewish Council  
*Kristallnacht*  
*Kapo*  
*Judenrien*  
National Socialist/Nazi  
Nuremberg Laws  
Persecution  
Prejudice  
Propaganda  
Racial Profiling  
Racism  
Scapegoat  
SS  
Stereotype  
Tolerance  
Transit camps  
*Wermacht*  
Work camps

## **Activities:**

### *Activity #1: Reflection Journal*

## **Objectives:**

1. To enable students to organize and present information relating to the Holocaust in a variety of genres
2. To enable students to discuss the Holocaust and related themes of injustice from an historical, autobiographical, and community-based views
3. To enable students to make effective use of quotations and other reference material to validate their points of view
4. To enable students to examine their own reactions to prejudice and injustice

## **Background:**

*Hidden Letters* presents the insidious effects of injustice and persecution on Dutch Jewry during the Holocaust. Flip's poignant letters beginning in April 1942 until September 1942 show the prolonged effects of isolation, discrimination and hate. Students may have been the target of discrimination themselves and/or witnessed others being victimized. These personal events as well as an examination of American history from the standpoint of injustice may heighten student awareness of the danger of discrimination in the community, national and international arenas. Material from this Reflection Journal can be used to write memoirs, poetry, readers' theatre, one act plays and other materials based on these themes.

## Materials:

Notebook divided into sections with room for optional personal reflections:

- (a) Flip's letters
- (b) Incidents of Injustice
  - Observed
  - Target
- (c) Historical
- (d) Quotations

## **Activity:**

- Students will examine Flip's letters chronologically and enter the date and text of those letters that demonstrate the effects of persecution on him, his family and other Dutch Jews. These statements will be placed in the Reflection Notebook section entitled Flip's letters.
- Students will find a quotation that reflects their personal response to that particular date and text of Flip's persecution and enter it in the Quotation section of the notebook.

Quotations can be found using Bartlett's Quotations, fiction and non-fiction literature, films and other media.

- Students will examine Flip's letters for similarities to instances of injustice they have witnessed or have been the target of. They will enter the nature of the injustice under the appropriate section of the journal and consider questions such as the following: Who was the target of the injustice? Who did the discrimination? How did it manifest itself? What action did they take? What was the response to that action? How did it make them feel?
- Students will examine American historical events reflecting discrimination such as the Jim Crow Laws, Chinese Exclusion Act, and The Indian Removal Act. They will analyze these events from these standpoints: Who was the target of the injustice? Who did the discrimination? How did it manifest itself? What action was taken by the target population and by the agent of the discrimination? How did this make them feel? They will enter their comments in the Historical section of the notebook.

## *Activity #2: History of Amsterdam's Jewish Community Activity*

### **Objectives:**

1. To research the history of the Jews of Amsterdam and put the events of the Holocaust, the Nazi presence and Flip's experience into a broader historical context
2. To write in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes
3. To engage in-group discussion and present information logically
4. To enhance note-taking abilities

### **Background:**

The book *Hidden Letters* gives some history of the Jews of Amsterdam, yet students will benefit from additional research that will help them understand Flip's life as well as the lives of other European Jews as more than a story of destruction at the hands of the Nazis. Before the Nazi invasion and control of Europe, Jews, with their own rich history and culture, had contributed greatly to the countries in which they lived .

It is believed that some Jews probably first came to Holland as early as Roman times; however, the Amsterdam Jewish community has its roots in the sixteenth century when many Jews left Spain. Most were *conversos*, also known as Marranos, who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism in Portugal and Spain and were secretly practicing Judaism. In Holland, the Jews eventually found greater tolerance. They were able to practice their religion more openly and become involved in local commerce and culture. These Spanish and Portuguese Jews, known as *Sephardim*, were soon followed by Jews from Eastern Europe, known as *Ashkenazim*. In Holland, Sephardic Jews tended to be more affluent than Ashkenazic Jews who were more likely to be artisans and small shopkeepers. Today, Amsterdam still has a small Jewish community that contributes to the city's culture and wellbeing.

### **Materials:**

Encyclopedic entries, books on Dutch and Jewish history, databases, periodicals.

### **Activity:**

- Students will research Dutch Jewish history in a variety of print and non-print sources. Students will vet the sources they consult (see Activity # 5: Verifying Information: Print Resources and Non-Print Resources and Activity #6: Verifying Resources).
- Students can present their findings in oral reports to the class or in written reports to the teacher. In their reports, students should reflect on how this research has changed their views of Flip and the Jews of Amsterdam.

*Variation:* Divide students into groups and assign a different period of Jewish history in Amsterdam and Holland to each group. Dutch Jewish history can be divided into: Roman and Medieval Times; the Sixteenth Century and Dutch Golden Age; the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century up to 1930; the 1930s and 1940s; the post-war era to today.

### *Activity #3: Anne Frank and Flip*

#### **Objectives:**

1. To understand more completely the plight of Holland's Jews under the Nazis and to gain a better understanding of the Holocaust
2. To write for a variety of purposes
3. To write in a variety of literary genres

#### **Background:**

Anne Frank is undoubtedly the best known of Hitler's victims. Flip and Anne's story have striking parallels and yet there are some pronounced differences. Like Flip, she wrote about her experiences under the Nazis but she recorded them in a diary whereas Flip used letters. Anne edited and rewrote and polished her diary. She had dreams of becoming a writer and may have thought that one day her diary would be published. On the other hand, Flip intended his letters only for his parents.

Unlike Flip, Anne was a German Jew who came to the Netherlands with her family to escape Nazi persecution. Her family had money, and she was able to remain with them while they hid from the Nazis. Flip's family was of modest means, and he was separated from them and sent to a work camp. Anne was a young girl when she went into hiding while Flip was a young man with a job when he went to Molengoot. This activity asks students to explore the differences and similarities of Flip and Anne.

#### **Materials:**

*Hidden Letters*

*Diary of Anne Frank*

Images of Flip and Anne (optional)

#### **Activity:**

- This activity can be done individually or in groups. Students can submit a written or oral report.
- This activity can also be led by the teacher in a class discussion.
- Have students read Flip's letters and Anne Frank's diary.
- After reading the letters and diary, students should compare Flip and Anne using these guidelines:

- a. What were their personal circumstances when the Nazis invaded Holland? B.
  - b. What were their personal circumstances when the Nazis instituted their anti-Jewish laws?
  - c. What genres did Flip and Anne write in?
  - d. How did these genres affect what they wrote?
- Ask students to imagine what a diary for Flip might say and what a letter from Anne might say and then have students write it.
  - Ask students to imagine what Anne and Flip might say to each other if today's technology had been available then and they had been able to text message each other.
  - Ask students to consider whether the ability to get and post information on the Internet, had it existed during World War II, would have made things different for Anne and Flip.

## *Activity #4: Who Are You?*

### **Objectives:**

1. To identify how national and international events affect individual lives
2. To use appropriate reference materials and to extract relevant information
3. To improve note-taking abilities
4. To create a timeline
5. To write in a variety of literary genres
6. To use interviewing skills

### **Background:**

*Hidden Letters* is the story of the Holocaust as seen through the experiences of Flip Slier and his family. His personal correspondence, photographs and family memorabilia as well as the inclusion of historical documents make his story compelling. The inclusion of a timeline exploring Flip's life against the backdrop of the Nazis' advancement highlights the social and political forces that shaped his destiny as well as the rest of European Jews. This timeline provides a blueprint for analyzing Nazi policies and demonstrating the importance of such movements on individuals. Students need to have the tools to identify those political and social movements that may lead to laws infringing on the rights and freedoms of members of their own country and/or of the global community. Looking at their own lives from the standpoint of major political and social changes can prove helpful in engaging students in political and social actions.

### **Materials:**

*Hidden Letters*

Reference materials such as almanacs, encyclopedias, databases, Internet resources

### **Activity:**

- Students prepare a timeline beginning with the year of their birth and ending with the current year. They can use "Time Line from Flip's Birth to His Arrival in Camp" as a model. (*Hidden Letters*, pages 14-19)
- Students complete their timeline isolating a significant world and/or national event that occurred in each year and add a statement why this had an impact on them, their family, community, nation and world from a political or social standpoint. The event could be a scientific, historical or political one. It could also be a natural phenomena such as Hurricane Katrina. If possible they should interview someone who may have also been affected by the event.
- Students meet in groups to discuss the events they have isolated. Then students write their own essay about (a) what this exercise has taught them about how different



individuals may react to events (b) how this activity has helped them to see other points of view and (c) how national and world events affect their personal lives.

*Activity #5: Verifying Information*  
*Print Resources and Non-Print Resources*

**Objectives:**

1. To analyze the credibility, objectivity and authenticity of information sources
2. To develop note-taking abilities
3. To evaluate and defend the legitimacy of print and non-print resources
4. To heighten objective decision-making

**Background:**

Nazi propaganda demonized and denigrated Jews and other groups to provide a rationale for their destruction. Arguments for their elimination were presented using unsupported inferences, visual images and stereotypes. *Hidden Letters* documents the 1933 book burning in Munich as an enactment of Heinrich Heine's comment "Where they burn books, they will in the end, burn human beings too." (*Hidden Letters*, p. 14) Flip's letters and supporting materials demonstrate how his family and other Dutch citizens were not only denied access to information from traditional sources such as libraries but also to radios and pigeons which were confiscated and outlawed, too. Cut off from unbiased information, citizens found it increasingly difficult to mobilize and act effectively.

*Hidden Letters* also presents information demonstrating that the international press, movies and radio were remiss in informing citizens about the fate of the Jews. (*Hidden Letters*, p. 63.) This activity will demonstrate how to evaluate print and non-print resources for accuracy and objectivity to empower an informed citizenry.

This activity is divided into print resources and non-print resources Internet, non-print resources television and film, and non-print resources radio.

*Print Resources*

**Materials:**

New York Times or other daily newspaper (one current and past issue)  
Weekly news magazine such as Newsweek or Time (one current and past issue)

**Activity:**

- Select a national or international topic to investigate.
- Identify the objectivity and accuracy of information reported on that topic by examining articles using the following form:
  - i. Who is the author or source of the article? Do they represent a political or religious organization?

- ii. What are their credentials?
  - iii. Is their information current?
  - iv. Are loaded and inflammatory words used? Derogatory labels? Generalities?
  - v. What proof is offered? Scientific, historical, vetted references?
  - vi. Where was the article placed (in the front, middle or back pages) and what does this indicate about the importance of the information?
  - vii. How much space is allocated to the article?
- After completing this form, students meet in small groups to discuss and compare the results of their findings. They design an evaluation tool for print sources and display the tool as a chart, web, or other graphic organizer or using a technology-based display such as PowerPoint.

*Non-Print Resources*  
A. *Internet*

**Materials:**

The Internet

- Select two websites discussing an international or national issue. One should represent a government or educational institution and one should represent a business or organization. Compare the websites using the following form:
  - i. Who is the author or source of the article? Do they represent a political or religious organization? What is the domain location? (i.e. .gov, .edu, .com, .org)
  - ii. What are their credentials? Is there an email address to respond to information?
  - iii. Is their information current? What is the copyright date? When was the website last updated?
  - iv. Has this site been evaluated by credible reviewing sources? Has it been linked by credible sources?
  - v. Are loaded and inflammatory words used? Derogatory labels? Generalities?
  - vi. What proof is offered? Scientific, historical, vetted references?

- After completing this form, students meet in small groups to discuss and compare the results of their findings. They design an evaluation tool for non-print sources and display the tool as a chart, web, or other graphic organizer or using a technology based display such as PowerPoint.

### *B. Television and Film*

#### **Objectives:**

1. To examine the impact of television and film on personal, community, national and global values.
2. To identify and analyze stereotypes and bias in the portrayals of different groups of people in television and film.
3. To consider the role of television and film in a democratic society.

#### **Background:**

The Nazis recognized the ability of the media to deliver controlled messages that would alter society's values, respect and protection to targeted groups. The Nazis demonized, denigrated and isolated the Jews in many ways. Figuring prominently in their scheme was their effective use and manipulation of print and non-print media to create negative images of the Jews as well as limiting Jewish access to sources of information such as radio and film. By 1942 in the Netherlands, for example, Dutch Jews were forced to surrender their radios and telephones and were banned from the cinema.

Today, television and film have a significant influence in defining who is or is not an American as well as who is or is not a citizen of the global community. Therefore, it is essential that students learn how to evaluate these mediums.

#### **Materials:**

Student television and film selections.

#### **Activity:**

- Students will choose a television show to watch on their own that focuses on family issues and then complete the following homework assignment:

Name of Television Show:

Channel or Network:

Time Slot:

Give a brief summary of the plot including the following:

- a. Major characters--their age, race, ethnicity, gender.
- b. Major problem characters are attempting to solve.
- c. Is the problem resolved? Why or why not?
- d. Does the way the problem is handled demonstrate stereotyping, bias, prejudice, or is it a realistic and fair portrayal of race, age, gender, and ethnicity of the characters?
- e. What message was the television show delivering directly and indirectly about the main characters, their values and worth? How did the show accomplish this? How did this make you feel?

- Students will choose a recently released film to watch on their own and then complete the following homework assignment:

Name of Film:

Release Date:

Producer:

Director:

Screenwriter:

Give a brief summary of the plot including the following:

- a. Major characters--their age, race, ethnicity, gender.
- b. Major problem characters are attempting to solve.
- c. Is the problem resolved? Why or why not?
- d. Does the way the problem is handled demonstrate stereotypes stereotyping, bias, prejudice or is it a realistic and fair portrayal of race, age, gender and ethnicity of the characters?
- e. What message were the screenwriter, director and producer delivering directly and indirectly about the main characters, their values and worth? How did the film accomplish this? How did this make you feel?

- The teacher will ask students to consider their television and film choices and direct a class discussion considering the following:

- a. Did the television and film selections create respect and recognition for your race, ethnicity, age group, gender? Why or why not? How was this done?
- b. Are there a significant number of television shows and films presenting your race, ethnicity, age group, gender? Yes or no. How does this reflect society's values concerning these issues?
- c. Are there certain races, ethnic groups, age groups, genders that are consistently not represented in these mediums? Who? Why? How?
- d. Are there certain groups or people consistently portrayed in a stereotypical or biased fashion in these mediums? Who? Why? How?

e. What direct or indirect messages do you think recent films and television shows are conveying about society's ideals regarding race, ethnicity, age group, gender? Does this need to be changed?

### *C. Film*

#### **Materials:**

The Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* (1934) by filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl.

#### **Activity:**

Students will watch the *Triumph of the Will*, and then the teacher will direct a class discussion asking students to:

- Analyze how the film's images, music and language were designed to deliver certain direct and indirect messages. What were these direct and indirect messages? What techniques did the filmmaker use to accomplish this goal?
- Think about the response to this film on those viewing it and on the people presented in the film.
- Reach conclusions about what they learned from this exercise and to write their conclusions in their reflection journals.

## *D. Radio*

### **Objectives:**

1. To examine how satellite radio has the changed the amount and variety of programming available to listeners and the implications of this for a democratic society
2. To examine legislative changes regulating the control of traditional radio broadcast outlets and the ramifications for a democratic society

### **Background:**

Adolf Hitler recognized early on that the radio was a powerful mechanism for bringing his political message into the homes of ordinary Germans. His voice, phrasing and claims made many of them feel he possessed the answers to the complex problems facing their nation and that his targeting of certain groups for isolation and persecution was a reasonable decision. In order to avoid conflicting viewpoints, he made the listening to foreign broadcasts a criminal offense. By 1942 Dutch Jews could not own radios at all.

Today, the advent of Sirius Satellite radio and XM Satellite radio enables individuals to have access to a wide range of diverse programming. Congressional legislation such as the Telecommunications Act of 1996 has allowed fewer corporations to own significant portions of traditional broadcast radio stations nationwide. This concentration of ownership has generated concern about the diversity of opinions expressed over these channels and the ramifications for a democratic society.

### **Materials:**

Reference materials such as web based resources, databases, periodicals, books

### **Activity:**

**This activity is comprised of two sections.**

#### *I. Satellite Radio*

1. After completing the assignment below the teacher will lead a class discussion based on student findings.
2. Students will use reference materials such as web based resources, databases, periodicals, books to research the history and implications of the development of satellite radio and focus on the answers to the following questions:
  - a. When did satellite radio become available?
  - b. How many subscribers do they have currently?
  - c. How many channels are currently available?

d. Compare the number and variety of programs available on satellite radio with those on traditional radio broadcast channels. How does this affect diversity of opinions? What are the ramifications for a democratic society?

## *II. Telecommunications Legislation*

Students will:

- a. Use reference materials such as web based resources, databases, periodicals, books to research the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and subsequent telecommunications and broadcast legislation up to the current day.
- b. Use computer software or other chart making tools to prepare a chart listing the title of the legislation, year of passage, legislator(s) responsible for the legislation, key features of the legislation, and pro and con statements on its effects on access to information.
- c. Meet in groups to discuss their findings.
- d. Students will engage in a panel discussion taking both sides of the regulation of broadcast ownership issues and debate its implications for a democratic society.



## *Activity #6: Verifying Resources*

### **Objectives:**

1. To identify and analyze how government policies and laws are shaped by the sources of information used
2. To identify and evaluate how specific language and images can be used to create hatred and intolerance
3. To examine historical documents for instances of bias and stereotyping
4. To have students share and evaluate their conclusions on the influence of propaganda on people's lives

### **Background:**

The Nazi Party Catechism provided a framework and justification for the disenfranchising, isolation and eventual death of most of the Jewish population in Europe. Its twenty-five points highlight the Nazis' perverted use of science, history and economics to distort the truth about Jews. In *Hidden Letters* both in the "Time Line From Flip's Birth to His Arrival in the Work Camp" (*Hidden Letters*, pages 14-19) as well as on chapter headers on pages 43, 45, 67 for example, the product of this philosophy is evident. This activity is designed to enable students to evaluate political party documents and their ramifications for government policy and laws.

### **Materials:**

The Nazi Catechism. See <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/catech.htm>  
*Hidden Letters*

### **Activity:**

- Students will read the Nazi Catechism and identify and list the use of specific words, images and characterizations used to create bigotry, stereotypes and unsupported conclusions about Jews.
- Students will use *Hidden Letters* to find examples of how these statements were used to exclude, isolate and lead to the murder of over 100,000 Dutch Jews.
- Students will meet in groups to discuss the results of their research and create an oral or written presentation highlighting the connections between the Nazi Catechism and its effects on Dutch Jewry as well as the implications of political dogma on current national and international policies.

## *Activity #7: Poetry*

### **Objectives:**

1. To read Flip's letters closely and understand his thoughts and feelings about his situation, his family's situation and the plight of Dutch Jews
2. To learn the different impacts that poetry and prose have on the reader

### **Background:**

Poetry can often convey emotion better than prose even when the same words are used and therefore create a stronger response in the reader.

### **Materials:**

*Hidden Letters*

### **Activity:**

Students will write a poem or series of poems using Flip's words. Poems can be in free verse or in traditional forms such as elegy, sonnets, haiku, concrete poetry, etc.

*Variation:* If students have been keeping a journal (see Activity # 1: Reflection Journal), they can add some of their own entries to Flip's words.

## Activity # 8: Drama -- Readers' Theatre or Play

### Objectives:

1. To analyze the different responses to the Nazi persecution of Dutch Jews as described in *Hidden Letters*
2. To bring to life the people that appear in *Hidden Letters* and thus deepen students' understanding of the effect the Holocaust had on its victims and survivors

### Background:

*Hidden Letters* contains not only Flip's letters but also letters by Simon Loonstijn (*Hidden Letters*, pages 132-133), Flip's friend, the Vrijlink (pronounced Vraylink) family who had helped Flip and Simon (*Hidden Letters*, p. 138), Lion Salomonson, a twelve-year-old boy in Westerbork (*Hidden Letters*, p.143), and Edith Stein, a Dutch Jew who had converted to Catholicism. (*Hidden Letters*, p. 95) The book also contains testimony and memoirs from Tootje Loonstijn (*Hidden Letters*, pages 98-99) and Philip Mechanicus, a prisoner at Westerbork, (*Hidden Letters*, pages 81, 146-8), a telegram from Szmul Zygielboim, a member of Polish government-in-exile, to the World Jewish Council (*Hidden Letters*, p. 62) and a diary of a baggage handler Westerbork (*Hidden Letters*, p.142) among others. There are the letters from the Jewish Council (e.g. *Hidden Letters*, pages 135, 170, note 86J) and directives and letters from the Nazi authorities (e.g. *Hidden Letters*, pages 68-69). These documents present a mosaic of voices that can be used to deepen students' understanding of the complexity of the Holocaust.

### Materials:

*Hidden Letters*

### Activity:

- For this activity, the class can be divided into groups.
- Students will use the words from letters, documents and testimony by Flip and others that appear in *Hidden Letters* to create a dramatic reading. If students have been keeping a reflection journal (see Activity #1: Reflection Journal), they can add material from their journals.
- Depending on how students organize the material they can emphasize any theme presented in *Hidden Letters* -- Flip's personality and plight, the tools that Nazis used to persecute the Jews, and the voices that protested.

*Variation:* Instead of a dramatic reading, students can write and produce a play.

## *Activity #9: Scrapbooking*

### **Objective:**

To increase students' understanding of Flip's life and the lives and culture of Dutch Jews before and during World War II by analyzing the photographs in *Hidden Letters* and using them in a multi-media activity

### **Background:**

*Hidden Letters* is rich in photographs and other illustrations of the period. In addition, Flip himself was an avid photographer, and he took many of the photographs that illustrate *Hidden Letters*. (Flip gave his photographs to his friend Karel van der Schaaf. Over the years Flip's photographs were mingled with others of the period, and we are not sure which ones Flip took himself.)

This scrapbooking activity will give students the opportunity to take a close look at Flip's and other photographs from a different perspective.

### **Materials:**

Copies of photographs from *Hidden Letters* or (optional) other related sources  
Construction paper or cardstock, scissors, adhesive, optional scrapbooking embellishments.  
Where available, scrapbooking software  
Letters and other testimony found in *Hidden Letters*  
Students' own journaling (see Activity#1: Reflection Journal)

### **Activity:**

- Students will make scrapbook pages using Flip's photographs and others found *Hidden Letters* and elsewhere around the following suggested themes:
  - a. Flip and his friends
  - b. Flip and his family
  - c. Flip's experience in Molengoot
  - d. Dutch Jewish life and culture before and during the Holocaust
  - e. Resistance to the Nazis
- Students will examine the photographs for their composition and subject matter. They should consider questions such as:
  - a. What is the picture about?
  - b. Who is in the picture? How are the people grouped?
  - c. What did the photographer intend to convey in the picture directly and indirectly?
- Students will incorporate text from *Hidden Letters* and from their own journaling into the scrapbook pages.

- Students can display their pages around the classroom and then bind them together into a single scrapbook that can be kept in the classroom or given to the school library.
- This is a good assignment for students working in pairs.

## *Activity#10: Voices of Protest -- Resisters, Rescuers, Collaborators and Bystanders*

### **Objectives:**

1. To identify and analyze different responses to threats from authority
2. To analyze the different forms resistance can take
3. To analyze the full ramifications of inaction
4. To enable students to make effective use of quotations and other reference material to validate their point of view.

### **Background:**

The reactions of Jewish and non-Jewish communities to the Nazi invasion fell into three basic categories: resistance or protest, collaboration, and standing by. *Hidden Letters* contains many examples of all three.

Resistance to the Nazis could take many forms, both active and passive, from armed resistance to smuggling letters. In *Hidden Letters*, we see two examples of armed resistance -- the revolt in the Sobibor death camp (*Hidden Letters*, p.151) and the sabotage of the Hollandia-Kattenburg clothing factory by Dutch civilians, including Flip's aunt Debora Slier (*Hidden Letters*, p. 131). Other forms of resistance included strikes, protests and petitions, noncompliance with Nazi orders as described in the section "Voices of Protest" (*Hidden Letters*, pages 21, 42) and evasion and flight such as Flip's and Simon's separate escapes from Molengoot. Some forms of protest were subtle, such as Flip outsmarting the guards or such as farmers like the Vrijlinks smuggling food to the inmates of Molengoot. One of the most noble forms of resistance was undertaken by those Dutch citizens who hid Jews, as described in the Introduction to *Hidden Letters* and elsewhere in the book.

Collaboration basically consisted of fully cooperating with the Nazis out of sympathy with their policies or desire for some sort of reward. Collaborators included Dutch citizens who joined the German army (*Hidden Letters*, p. 44), the Dutch authorities who arrested Jews (*Hidden Letters*, p. 114) and helped run work camps like Molengoot and the Dutch factories that employed forced labor. People who complied with Nazi orders because of fear of punishment have generally not been considered collaborators. There is, therefore, a difference of opinion as to whether the men who ran the Jewish Council in Holland and complied with Nazi orders regarding Jews as well as *kapos* (most of whom were Jews) who helped Nazis police the camps (*Hidden Letters*, pages 115, 123), should be considered collaborators. Those who consider them to be collaborators point to the degree to which they cooperated with the Nazis and urged or forced compliance by other Jews.

The bystander watches and neither actively resists nor collaborates. Most of the Dutch population fell into this category. (*Hidden Letters*, p. 142) So did many of Europe's governments. A greater percentage of Jews were killed in those countries where the non-Jewish

population chose to stand by. In Denmark, the Danes refused to be bystanders, and they were able to save most of their country's Jews. At the Evian Conference in 1938 the Nazis saw the inaction of the world's governments regarding the plight of the Jews in Germany as a sign that they could go ahead with their anti-Jewish agenda. Yet when the governments of Bulgaria and Finland, allies of Germany, refused to arrest their Jewish citizens, the Nazis backed off. The Holocaust raises the question of whether there really is such a thing as a mere bystander. Do inaction and silence equal complicity? When, if ever, can doing nothing be justified?

**Materials:**

*Hidden Letters*

Other material on the Holocaust and other acts of genocide (optional)

**Activity:**

This activity also makes a good writing assignment and can be divided into several activities depending on the teacher's needs.

The teacher leads a class discussion where the students do the following:

1. Identify examples of collaboration, resistance and standing by in *Hidden Letters*.
2. Discuss why one would choose to stand by, resist or collaborate with the Nazi regime.
3. Respond, either as part of the discussion or in a written report, to one or more of the following quotes in light of the incidents and characters portrayed in *Hidden Letters*:
  - a) Elie Wiesel: "There may be a time when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest. "
  - b) Edmund Burke: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."
  - c) Martin Niemoller:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out -  
because I was not a Socialist.  
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out -  
because I was not a Trade Unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out -  
because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak for me.
  - d) Edward Yashinsky (Yiddish poet who survived the Holocaust only to die in a Communist prison in Poland):

Fear not your enemies,  
for they can only kill you.  
Fear not your friends, for  
they can only betray you.  
Fear only the indifferent,  
who permit the killers and  
betrayers to walk safely

on the earth.

4. Imagine, either as part of the discussion or in a written report, what they would do if the government declared that all green-eyed persons were subhuman and would be arrested and exterminated. What would they do if :

- a) their best friend had green eyes;
- b) someone they didn't like had green eyes;
- c) they had green eyes;
- d) a green-eyed person they did not know asked if he or she could hide in their house;
- e) the government would imprison anyone who helped a green-eyed person escape or hide;
- f) the government would imprison the families of anyone who helped a green-eyed person escape or hide;
- g) the government offered free cell phones and laptops loaded with the latest video games to anyone who helped capture a green-eyed person;
- h) the government offered \$10,000 to anyone who helped capture a green-eyed person? \$100,000? \$1 million?

5. Reconsider their responses to the quotes by Wiesel, Burke and Niemoller after this discussion.

*Variation:* Ask students to consider their responses in light of contemporary genocide controversies such as Rwanda and Darfur.



## *Activity # 11: Can It Happen Here? School and Local Community*

### **Objectives:**

1. To identify examples of injustice, discrimination, bigotry and racism in their school and/or community
2. To develop a plan to address problems and present it to the appropriate decision-making group

### **Background:**

Flip's story and the fate of Dutch Jews in the Netherlands demonstrate how effectively hatred and intolerance can lead to genocide in the absence of appropriate individual, national and international responses. *Hidden Letters* focuses on the need for all citizens to respond to injustice. The following activity encourages students to make a difference by becoming informed and proactive citizens of their communities.

### **Activity:**

- Students identify no more than three examples of injustice in their school and /or community.
- Students research the problem and collect evidence about the policies or conditions that led to this injustice.
- Students gather in groups to discuss the examples and decide which problem should be addressed. Students consider whether the school or community will commit support and resources to the problem.
- Student groups present their findings to the other groups using charts, webs and other visuals.
- Students then isolate one problem they would like addressed and present their proposal for change to key decision-making groups (school officials, community administrators, legislators).

## *Activity# 12: Can It Happen Here? United States*

### **Objectives:**

1. To identify examples of injustice, discrimination, bigotry and racism in the United States
2. To develop a plan to address problems and present it to the appropriate decision-making group

### **Background:**

Flip's story and the fate of Dutch Jews in the Netherlands demonstrate how effectively hatred and intolerance can lead to genocide in the absence of appropriate individual, national and international responses. *Hidden Letters* focuses on the need for all citizens to respond to injustice. The United States has not been immune from official discrimination and racial and ethnic injustice as evidenced by the Jim Crow laws in the South, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Indian Removal Act, the denial of women's suffrage and other rights, and the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. The following activity encourages students to make a difference by becoming informed and proactive citizens.

### **Activity:**

- The class can be divided into groups or pairs for this activity.
- Students identify no more than three examples of injustice in American history and in the present.
- Students research the problem and collect evidence about the policies or conditions that led to this injustice.
- Students present their findings to the other groups using charts, webs and other visuals.
- Students discuss and identify ways these kinds of injustices can be prevented from happening now and in the future.